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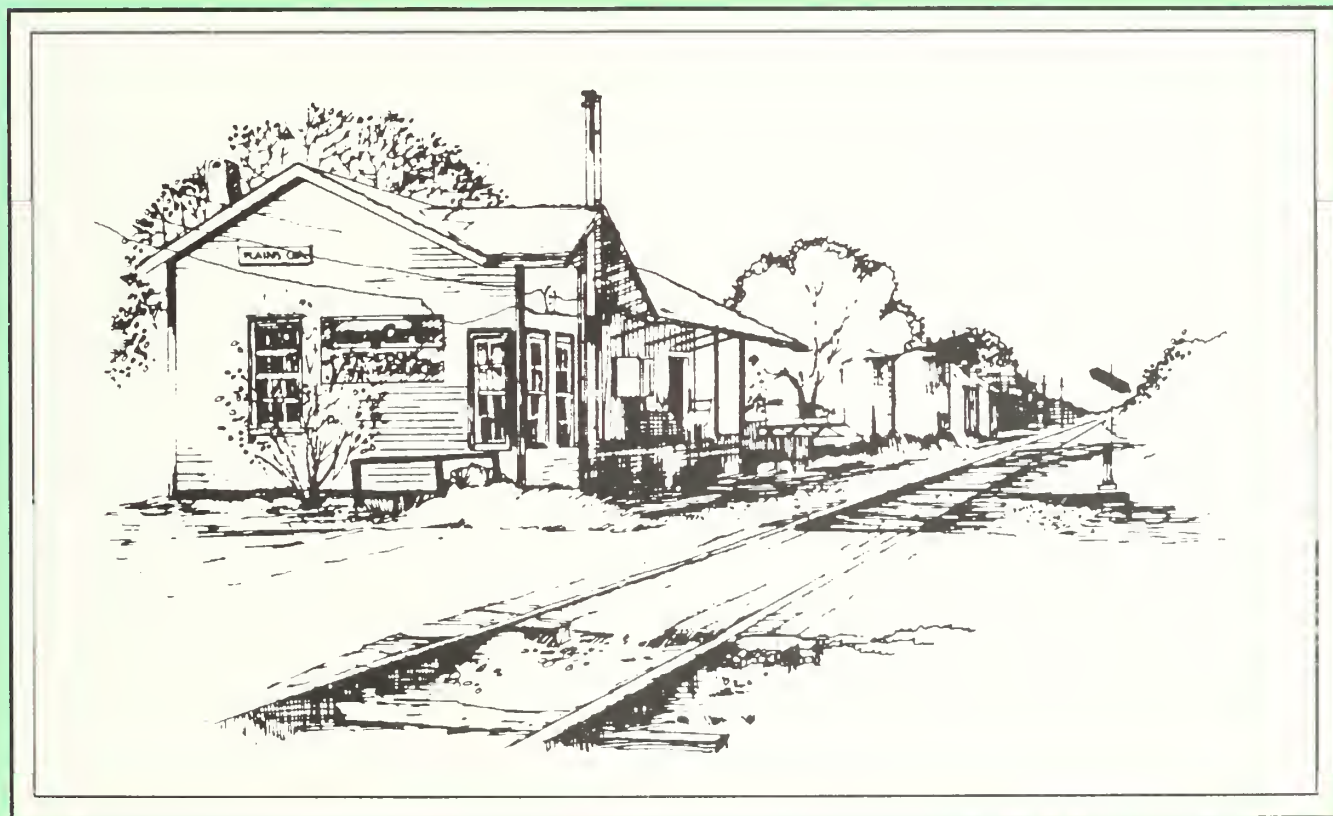
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# Jimmy Carter

National Historic Site and Preservation District  
Georgia





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november 1991

by  
William Patrick O'Brien

**JIMMY CARTER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
AND PRESERVATION DISTRICT • GEORGIA**

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



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All interpretations or errors in fact, of course, remain the responsibility of the author.

William Patrick O'Brien

## PREFACE

On January 26, 1976 the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District was determined eligible for inclusion in the *National Register of Historic Places* at the request of the General Services Administration. The nomination was certified by the keeper of the *National Register* on June 28, 1984. On December 23, 1987, the 100th Congress of the United States of America, under Public Law 100-26 formally established the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District in Plains, Georgia as a unit of the National Park Service, United States Department of Interior. The legislation empowers the government to "(1) preserve the key sites and structures located within the historic site associated with Jimmy Carter during his life span; (2) provide for the interpretation of the presidency of Jimmy Carter; and (3) present the history of a small rural southern town."

Since the park's nomination to the *National Register* and establishment, various studies have been accomplished by the National Park Service, including a *Research Report On Structures and Sites for the Proposed Jimmy Carter National Historic Site* (Sandra Dixon, Southeast Regional Office, 1985); a *Statement for Interpretation* (No Author, 1988); a *Statement for Management* (John Tucker, Superintendent, 1988); and the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record's *Survey of the Plains National Historic District* (Elizabeth Barthold, et al., 1989). In addition, the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism contracted for *A Study of Tourists Who used the Georgia Visitor Information Centers During 1988* (1988, Davidson-Peterson Associates, Inc.) One such center is located at Plains. In 1988, an Advisory Commission for the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site was established to assist future planning for the resource. In addition, the Plains Task Force, a local planning group, also meets regularly with the National Park Service to assist in planning for future projects.



## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is threefold. It places the extant cultural resources of Plains, Georgia within the context of an American presidential hometown. It assesses those resources that reflect important themes in the life of the 39th President of the United States as he grew to adulthood in the region of southwestern Georgia in the first half of the 20th century. Finally, it offers analyses and recommendations for specific cultural resources and future interpretation.

The special history study is a general guide to future study and interpretation, not a definitive historical analysis of the Carters and Plains. Our knowledge of Carter and his hometown is limited; little research has been accomplished concerning the social history of Plains as it applies to Jimmy Carter and his political evolution and career. Research and writing of this study was accomplished over a nine month period, concurrent with the transcribing and editing of approximately 1,300 pages of audio and video taped oral history interviews by National Park Service staff from 1988 to 1990. The interpretation presented in the following pages relies on these primary source materials and other secondary source information. As such, the product is a document broad in scope, attempting to call out specific stories and ideas important to the park's general planning and interpretation. This preliminary study is not an in depth, definitive historical document. Rather, it notes certain key elements and calls for more extensive, detailed research to be done over a period of time on a variety of related subjects. The document should be looked upon as organic, one that continues to grow with the park as research progresses and interpretations grow and evolve.<sup>1</sup>

This special history study is the next step in the planning process for the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District. It includes a background history of the region, an inventory of significant historic resources, and recommendations for further research. The special history study provides the initial historical documentation for a General Management Plan for the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District scheduled for completion in 1991.

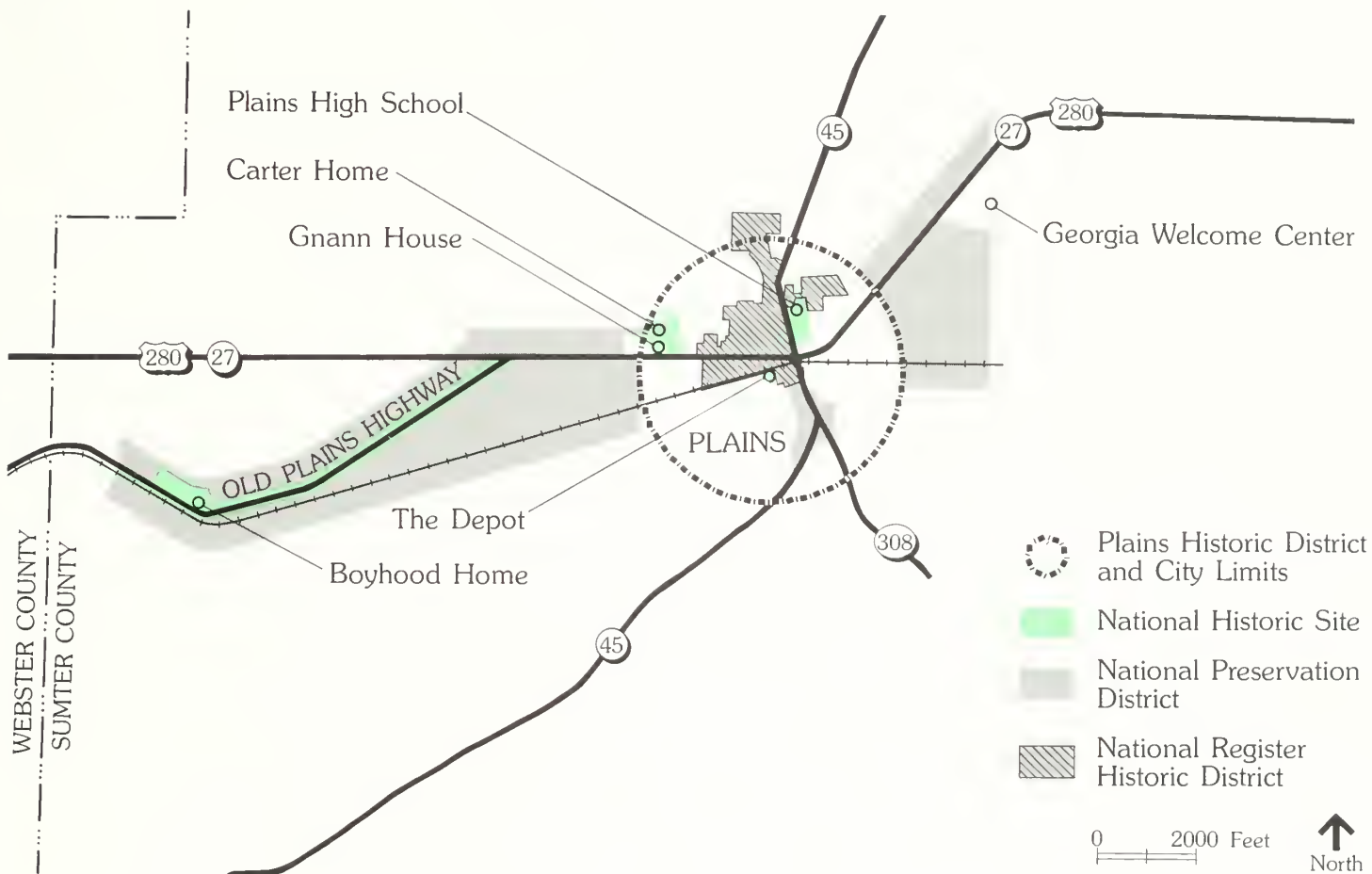
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1. As Dr. Steven Hochman has pointed out, the social history of Plains and its relationship to Jimmy Carter would make fine material for a Master's thesis or doctoral dissertation.

## VISION STATEMENT

The Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District are representative of the themes of Military and Political Affairs after 1945 (IX), Agriculture (XI), Education (XXVII), American Ways of Life (XXX) and Social and Humanitarian Movements (XXXI) as noted in the National Park Service's *History and Prehistory in the National Park System and the National Historic Landmarks Program* (Washington: National Park Service, 1987).

The Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District offers a unique opportunity for the National Park Service to preserve, conserve and interpret the cultural milieu of the 39th President of the United States. Through research and interpretation, the story of Jimmy Carter and the New South can be made available to the public so that they may better understand both the relationship of the man and his hometown as well the national and international consequences of his presidency.



**Jimmy Carter**  
 National Historic Site  
 and Preservation District  
 U.S. Department of the Interior  
 National Park Service  
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# Part One: Background and History



## BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

To quote Professor Robert Pois, "the relationship of the individual to the general, which orders him even as he seeks to order it . . ." remains "the most difficult and intriguing of all historical problems."<sup>2</sup> So it is with Jimmy Carter and Plains, Georgia. The community of Plains contributed to the formation of a man who became President of the United States. Accordingly, the successful conclusion of Jimmy Carter's bid for the Presidency in 1976 changed forever the town of Plains and its relationship with the outside world. The story of Jimmy Carter and Plains is the classic historical relationship of the general, the specific, and their dynamic relationship to one another. Generally, it is the story of a place and its change over time – a story of land, of race, religion – of sex and gender, politics and economics – of both social obligation and community responsibility. Specifically, it is the story of one man's attempt to understand his life in terms of his place and responsibility in local, national and international community and his attempt to put that understanding into practical action.

Both John Milton and William Wordsworth observed that "the childhood shows the man, as morning shows the day" and "the child is father to the man."<sup>3</sup> Carter's early experiences as a member of the Plains and Sumter County communities in southwestern Georgia helped form basic outlooks that affected his intellectual development. Here farm life attuned him to nature and a constant change of seasons, as well as important lessons taught in family, church, and school. Here the community of Plains gave him the strong and positive local base and philosophies from which he would build an international career. He expanded on his experiences in Plains in his college and military careers. The social and political agendas he realized as a member of the Sumter County School board, and as State Senator, Governor of Georgia and President of the

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2. Robert A. Pois, "Historicism, Marxism and Psychohistory: Three Approaches to the Problem of Historical Individuality", *The Social Science Journal* 13 (October, 1976): 77-91. Dr. Henry King Stanford, chairman of the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District Advisory Commission has noted that French philosopher and literary critic Hippolyte-Adolphe Taine believed that history resulted from the interaction of *race, milieu* and *moment* and that "Jimmy Carter's life surely reflects the convergence of those forces in his development."

3. John Milton, *Paradise Regained* [1671] and William Wordsworth, *My Heart Leaps up When I Behold* [1802] as quoted in *Bartlett's Quotations*, 348, 511.

United States, in terms of regional, state, national and global policies, firmly grounded themselves in the cultural milieu of his childhood and early adolescence.

Southwest Georgia and Plains are complex locales with long, involved histories inclusive of most of the major themes in American history. The personality of James Earl Carter, Jr. is as complex as the town and region in which he grew up. In many ways, it is difficult to separate one from the other. In others, the separation is clear and distinct. A man whose intellectual and cultural interests range from Willie Nelson and Bob Dylan to Dylan Thomas, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich – a man who is conversant with both nuclear physics and Baptist Sunday School – is a complex man. A town whose population of 716 includes various races, a town located in a region that contains both white supremacist organizations and radical, inter-racial, communal farming experiments – is a complex town. Both Carter the individual and the Plains community share symbiotic complexities that infer attendant conflicts. As social historians have noted, the successful resolution of conflict is directly related to the success or failure of a community.<sup>4</sup> The same is true of individuals. As with a community, an individual's success is in part directly related to his successful resolution of conflicts – public and private. To quote the American philosopher Josiah Royce, individuals have "no reality or identity until [they] function in society . . . community is born of the one and the many."<sup>5</sup> The interaction of the individual and the community creates a dynamic tension that, in turn translates into meaningful relationships between *Gemeinschaft* (Community) and the larger *Gesellschaft* (Society). These relationships, taking place and changing over time, we call history.

The dialectic created by opposing forces provided opportunities for both Carter the individual and Plains as a community. Oftentimes, success provided opportunity for growth. Sometimes, failure provided equally challenging opportunities for growth; the Carter families used both success and failure as positive bases for later successes. Regardless of the breathtaking victories or stunning defeats, Jimmy Carter did not give up. His tenacity, grounded in a firm religious and familial

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4. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census for Plains, Sumter County, Georgia, 1990*; Robert Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), passim; Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville Illinois, 1820-1870* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978), p.4; John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), passim; Robert Hine, *Community on the American Frontier: Separate But Not Alone*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), passim.

5. Robert Hine, "The American West As Metaphysics: A Perspective on Josiah Royce", *Pacific Historical Review* 58 (August 1989): 267-291.

faith, was a gift of love from his childhood, given to him by his Plains community. What Carter and his community did with those opportunities over time, how they resolved their conflicts, and the effect of their interactions on each other's lives, together with the combined effect of those experiences on regional and national life, is the essence of the story of Jimmy Carter and Plains, Georgia.

## **SOUTHWEST GEORGIA – REGION AND PLACE**

As historians and geographers note, history "takes place" – that is, it occurs in a specific locale over time and is directly affected by that locale, just as the locale is directly affected by the events that occur there over time.<sup>6</sup> To understand the relationship of Jimmy Carter and the town of Plains, one must understand the geographical context of the region in which both developed.

Plains, Georgia is part of the southwest Georgia Coastal Plain's Flint River region, watered by that stream and its tributaries, covering approximately 8,460 miles. The waters of the Flint River region contain various types of fish, such as catfish, bass, perch and carp. Other woodland wildlife includes such animals as deer, turkey, duck, opossum, raccoon and fox. The majority of the region's soils are comprised of sandy loams that are acid and infertile, lacking lime content and requiring fertilization and other additional augmentation for crop cultivation. The upland soils, the majority of which are well-drained, support an adapted crop base of cotton, corn, peanuts, tobacco, pastures, small grains, soybeans and similar plants. The Orangeberg, Faceville, Greenville and Magnolia soils, varying in rich sienna, burnt umber, oxblood and bright red ferrous hues, contrast abruptly with the surrounding vegetation's various shades of deep green. These last soil types comprise the majority of the earth bed in Sumter County.

Various plants and trees including sweet and red bay, tupelo, hickory, tulip, sweet and black gum, red oak, white oak, water oak, myrtle, sycamore, small magnolia, red flowering maple and beech grow in the watersheds; long-leaf and yellow pine, persimmon, barren, scrub, black jack, post, and upland willow oak, black walnut, chinquapin, wild plum, whortleberry, wild haw and maple

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6. D.W. Meinig, *Southwest: Three Peoples In Geographical Change, 1690-1970*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), passim; Donald Worster, *River of Empire: Water, Aridity and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), passim; Richard White, *Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees and Navajos* (University of Nebraska Press, 1983), passim.

accompany the introduced species of pecan and peach in the uplands. In the spring, the reds and greens of the landscape are punctuated with the white, pinks, pastel yellows, and reds of magnolia, chestnut, peach and honeysuckle. The smell of honeysuckle and pine permeates the springtime air, an intoxicating fragrance that specifically designates the region's springtime season. The effect is rich and unique, creating, with the blue sky, palates of colors and odors that mark the countryside with its own special chromatic and olfactory personality.

Summers are hot, averaging above 80 degrees, and traffic often turns the red, unpaved roads of Sumter County into churning byways of red dust that settles on the underbrush in pink and red layers. Rains can turn those same roads into sticky red mires. Most roads are now paved, but the occasionally red dirt path still crosses an asphalt highway, leaving red dirt on the black surface, together with memories of earlier times and ways. Gnats swarm in large gray clouds in the summer, causing people to fan themselves as they talk in their yards, in futile attempts to keep the hordes of little insects at bay. Falls and winters in the region are mild and rainy with an average of 50 degrees, but the weather is often cold enough for heat to be necessary in homes – cold enough to frost at times. Frost free growing seasons vary from 290 days in the southern part of the state to 190 in the northern regions. Sumter County averages about a 245 days frost-free growing season with a 6-day variable. Average rainfall is in excess of 53 inches per year.<sup>7</sup>

Industrial pollution problems are minimal; however, controversial waste disposal operations such as the use of incinerators continue to be items of heartfelt discussion by Flint River region residents north of Sumter County. The region remains, for the most part, rural and agriculturally based. A regional planning commission, established with the help of President Carter in 1965, oversees the general development of the area.<sup>8</sup>

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7. Ovid L. Futchs, *History of Andersonville Prison* (University of Florida Press, 1968), 2. Hereafter referred to as Futchs, *History of Andersonville*; Georgia Department of Agriculture, *Georgia Agriculture* (No place of publication or date), 8-10; David E. Christensen, "Rural Occupance in Transition: Sumter and Lee Counties, Georgia." (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1956), 3-28.

8. William Patrick O'Brien, Historian, National Park Service, Telephone Conversation with Karen Oliver, Preservation Planner, Middle Flint Area Planning and Development Commission, Ellaville, Georgia, 3 October 1990. Hereafter cited as O'Brien, Conversation, etc.

## SOUTHWEST GEORGIA – PEOPLE (PRE-HISTORY TO 1827)

The Flint River region of southwestern Georgia has been occupied by humans for over 15,000 years. As of 1989, 11 archeological sites have been recorded in Sumter County.<sup>9</sup> Anthropologists specializing in the region divide pre-historic and historic occupation of the area into 6 major epochs: the Paleo-Indian Period (ca. 13,000-6,000 B.C.); the Archaic Period (ca. 6,000-1,000 B.C.); the Woodland Period (ca. 1,000 B.C.-900 A.D.); the Mississippi Period (ca. 900-1540 A.D.); the Historic Indian Period (ca. 1540-1838 A.D.); and the Historic Afro-European Period (ca. 1540-1950 A.D.).

During the Archaic Period, human groups evolved into bands, population increased and life centered around a hunting/gathering system. A cyclical system of movement replaced haphazard nomadic wandering. Changes in community were slow over the next 5,000 or so years. Great change occurred during the Woodland Period, during which pottery technology, burial customs and trade networks emerged. Life still centered around hunting and gathering but some agriculture also existed. Complex tribal organization and sedentary villages came into existence, augmented by seasonal settlements. Intrusions into the southwestern region of Georgia in the Mississippi Period by other Native Americans from the Mississippi Valley and the Tennessee-Ohio-Cumberland area caused major cultural changes. Fortified settlements, lineal chieftainships, political exchanges with other tribes, agriculture and an involved ceremonial base mark the period's major characteristics. Thus, the early community base of southwest Georgia established itself in the years before European incursion.<sup>10</sup>

With the advent of Europeans in the 16th century, the Native American community of southwestern Georgia changed forever. In 1540, Hernando De Soto's Spanish troops became the first Europeans to make contact with the native populations of Georgia; some historians feel that on his expedition through the southeast De Soto may have traversed the lands defined today as Sumter County. From the Spanish point of view the expedition was an expensive failure. No riches were found and the southeastern interior was judged of little value. In this region, which

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9. Map, County Archeological Sites, Georgia Archeological Site File, University of Georgia, Athens, May 1989. According to an article in *The Profile* 46 (December, 1984): 4. Only two archeological reports for Sumter County had been filed up to that time. An update in August of 1989 confirmed the number of reports to that date.

10. Morgan R. Crook, Jr., *A Strategy for Cultural Resource Planning in Georgia* ([Atlanta]: State of Georgia, Department of Natural Resources, 1986), 10-15. Hereafter cited as Crook, *Planning in Georgia*.

they called Florida, the Spanish would concentrate on establishing coastal settlements. Spanish settlement on the Florida coast was challenged by rival European powers. The French threat was countered, but during the 17th century, England established permanent settlements in Virginia and the Carolinas.<sup>11</sup>

European cultural and biological systems heavily impacted Native American life. In order to survive in America, the European invaders could not rely on military strength alone. They had to learn about Native American crops, farming practices, and methods of construction. While they destroyed the Indian tribes' traditional lives and populations, they also established political alliances and trading relationships in the process.

Western Europeans adapted their technology and social systems to the region, now styled by invading Europeans such as James Oglethorpe as a colony in 1733. Georgia was established as both a strategic expertise and also as an experiment in philanthropy and social engineering. The colony initially had strict regulations prohibiting slavery and alcoholic beverages, limited the size of land grants and regulated relations with Native Americans. Settlers opposed the restrictions and by 1750 they had been removed. After that time, Georgia followed the patterns of Virginia and the Carolinas, importing African slaves as part of a newly devised European plantation culture. Conflicts between Native American groups and European colonists resulted in initial bloody conflicts and later acculturation and removal of native populations. Some southeastern tribes adopted certain elements of European influences, incorporating various cultural influences into their traditional social patterns. The Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee and Seminole groups became known to Euro-Americans as the "Five Civilized Tribes." The Creeks occupied the region known today as Sumter County, Georgia.<sup>12</sup>

The Creeks and others adopted Euro-American customs, including African slavery. They were politically adept at exploiting the rivalries among the various European powers. After the

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11. David B. Quinn, *North America From Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 206-222, 225-227.

12. David Hawke, *The Colonial Experience* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), 373-376; Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and American Indians*, 2 Volumes. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 180; Arrell Morgan Gibson, *The American Indian: Prehistory to the Present* (New York: D.C. Heath and Company, 1980), 325-326. Hereafter cited as Gibson, *The American Indian*; Dr. Steven Hochman, Jimmy Carter National Historic Site Advisory Board to Superintendent Fred Boyles, Jimmy Carter National Historic Site, April 9, 1991, 2.

American Revolution, such political activity became more difficult. Anglo-American Georgians continually pressed the Native Americans to give up more land. In 1790, the Creeks negotiated the Treaty of New York with the new government of the United States. Some lands were given up, but in exchange the Creeks were guaranteed permanent possession of what they retained. However, the state of Georgia refused to ratify the treaty. In 1802, the Federal Government reversed its policy when, in a settlement of Georgia boundary claims, it agreed to secure for the state all Indian lands by purchasing them as quickly as possible. Thus, removal of the Creeks and other Indians from the region became official policy.<sup>13</sup>

Through a variety of tactics, including bribery and intimidation, the Creek Nation of the Flint River region was induced to surrender land grants to the United State Government in 1814, 1818, and 1821. Their center of government was located at Coweta, sixty miles northwest of Plains, near present day Columbus. In 1823, the council of the Creek Nation prescribed death for any members giving up Creek lands without council approval. The Upper Creeks, full-bloods led by Opothleyaholo, refused to deal with Euro-American land interests; however, William MacIntosh, chief of the mixed-blood Lower Creeks, signed the Treaty of Indian Springs in 1825. Upper Creeks set fire to his house and killed him for this act. The act seemed to connote a question of political hegemony within the Creek Nation more than anything else. Opothleyaholo then traveled to Washington with the Creek Council's approval. The Lower Creeks wished to avenge MacIntosh's death, but instead found their lands ceded by Opothleyaholo and the Creek Nation in exchange for lands in Indian Territory under the Treaty of Washington in 1826. The Lower Creeks migrated to these lands, thus averting civil war. As a result, in 1827, federal authorities removed the Creek Indians of the Flint River region under the First Treaty of Washington. This required the abandonment of townsites such as the one maintained by the Chehaw in the Americus vicinity; the general area along the Muckalee and Mill creeks had been a village site for various Native Americans for more than 10,000 years.

In 1828, six whites and a free black couple crossed the Flint River at Shelby's Ferry, thus becoming the first non-native peoples of record to settle in the Creek territory that would later become Sumter County. By 1838, the Native American question had been decided by Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal policy. The national status of Georgia Indian tribes, as defined by the Supreme

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13. E. Merton Coulter, *Georgia: A Short History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 182-183, 204-205.

Court in Chief Justice John Marshall's *Worcester v. Georgia*, was ignored as thousands of Native Americans were forced *en masse* to lands west of the Mississippi, outside the borders of the United States. The lands of Georgia, including those of the Flint River region, were now appropriated by Euro-Americans without the previous complications of Indian occupation or ownership.<sup>14</sup>

## **SOUTHWEST GEORGIA, SUMTER COUNTY AND THE PLAINS OF DURA (1827-1865)**

President James Earl Carter, Jr. traces his American ancestors to one Thomas Carter who arrived in Virginia from England about 1635. The Carter family has lived in Georgia for about 180 years, and for the last 100 or so years, a branch has maintained residence in the Plains area. The early Carters were not wealthy plantation owners – but they were not poor, land-bound peasants, either. However, in two or three generations, the Carters became small planters in their own right. Kindred Carter was the first Carter to enter Georgia about 1787, moving from Bertie, North Carolina. Kindred, his wife, 4 children and 10 slaves worked a 307 acre farm, raising wheat and cotton. Slaveholders, they were part of the then accepted agricultural system dependent on African slave labor. Farmers of their class often walked the fields, supervising their human chattel, overseeing the labor and, when the situation called for it, worked alongside their black bondsmen and women. Other families, such as the Gordys, also moved to the region about 1803; members of this clan served in the Revolutionary War. The Gordys were the matrilineal antecedents of President James Earl Carter, Jr.

The Carters and the Gordys were independent members of extended northern European family clan networks, augmented by marriage and maintained by familial and religious bonds, as well as by economic and political necessity. Baptists and Methodists made up the majority of church-

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14. Crook, *A Strategy for Cultural Resource Planning in Georgia*, 15-16; Beth M. Walters, comp. *History of Plains, Georgia, 1885-1985* (By the author, [1985]), 1; Gibson, *The American Indian*, 325-327; Thomas H. Gresham and Robbie F. Ethridge, *Archeology at the Mill Creek Site* (Southeastern Archeological Services, Inc., [1988]), 23, 35-36; Alan Anderson, "Chronology of Americus and Sumter County, Georgia." (TMs, 1987), n.p.; Steven Borns, *People of Plains, Ga.* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1978), 2. Occupation of the Plains and Sumter County region over 10,000 years included such groups as the Paleo-Indian, Archaic, Woodland, Mississippian, and Historic Native American groups. Creeks remaining in Alabama after 1827 were harassed by Euro-American settlers, until, by 1832 they saw the futility of attempting to retain their property. The Second Treaty of Washington (1832), which dissolved the remaining Creek Nation in Alabama, allowed for monies to move Creeks to the Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma and Kansas, and resulted in about 630 Native Americans opting for removal. The majority stayed, accepting small allotments of land. Continual dishonesty and machinations by Euro-Americans resulted in the Creek Rebellion in Alabama in 1836, after which the Creeks were moved to the Indian territory by force. Fifteen thousand reached the West; 3,500 died on the way. Gibson, *The American Indian*, 326-327.

peoples in the region. James and Jesse Carter, sons of Kindred, obtained lands by lottery in Talbot County in the former Creek Nation and became successful cotton farmers. James Carter's son, Wiley Carter, became the patrilineal scion of the Carter clan of Plains.<sup>15</sup>

Sumter County was platted from Lee County in 1831 and named for Colonel Thomas Sumpter of South Carolina, a Revolutionary War hero. According to one source, the 312,576 acres of Sumter County initially sold for anywhere from \$5.00 to \$50.00 per acre. According to local tradition, American settlers founded the community of the Plains of Dura in Sumter County in the mid-1830s on the Americus-Preston Road. It was one of a number of settlements that looked to the county seat of Americus for government, markets, and social legitimacy. Two other towns, Magnolia Springs and Lebanon, along with The Plains of Dura, reflected the fundamental religious background of the region's new American inhabitants in the biblical origin of their town names. The name, "Plains of Dura", was a biblical reference, taken from Daniel 3:1 – the plain where Nebuchadnezzar II set up his golden idol that the Israelites Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego, refused to worship. According to biblical tradition, they refused and were cast into a burning furnace from which they emerged alive and unhurt as a sign of God's favor. Although the name most probably comes from the Arabic root *dhurah*, the name is also reminiscent of the Latin *durus/durare* meaning hard or to last – to endure. The name of Lebanon referred to the region in the Middle East from which King Solomon obtained the cedars for his temple in Jerusalem. These names, together with Magnolia Springs, evoked both the concept of the religious "city on the hill" – the perfect community – as well as an idyllic image of fresh waters and fragrant, blooming plants. Later, more pedestrian names would grace other neighboring communities such as Anderson Station, Cobb, Leslie, and De Soto, reflecting either the town founders themselves or, as in De Soto, the beginnings of European history in the region.<sup>16</sup>

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15. Bruce Mazlish and Edwin Diamond, *Jimmy Carter: A Character Portrait* (Simon and Schuster, 1979), 18-27. Hereafter referred to as Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*; Betty Glad, *Jimmy Carter: In Search of the Great White House* (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1980), 23. Hereafter referred to as Glad, *Jimmy Carter*; Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., "Georgia Family Lines: Carter-Gordy", *Georgia Life* (Winter, 1976): 41. Hereafter referred to as Thomas, "Carter-Gordy".

16. Steven Borns, *People of Plains, Georgia* (New York: McGraw-Hill Company, 1978), 3; Thomas, "Carter-Gordy", 7; Peggy Sheppard, *Andersonville, Georgia, U.S.A.* (Andersonville: Sheppard Publications, 1987), 9; Ovid L. Futch, *History of Andersonville*, 3. The third chapter of Daniel is also the chapter in which Daniel, the Hebrew prophet, is set up by the enemy king as one of "three presidents" or governors in the land.

The County of Sumter was a typical rural, agrarian-based network of families and communities centered around a central point of county government. Although the population increased tenfold between 1830 and 1840, with farms making up 80 percent of the countryside, three-fourths of the region remained uncleared for cultivation. By 1850, the region was one of increased cotton production; it remained the main cash crop, along with some corn and wheat. Land prices rose from .17 an acre in 1829 to \$2.45 an acre in 1833; by 1850 the price had risen to \$10.00 an acre. Lee and Sumter Counties produced 17,000 bales of cotton in 1850. Americus, founded in 1831, remained the center of politics and culture for the region. African slavery gave to the region a special cultural element. The Plains of Dura operated as a small agricultural center, isolated and self-sufficient. Mail arrived from the county seat by horseback or buggy twice a week. Farms were unpretentious for the most part, consisting of a modest main house, generally of frame construction, surrounded by various outbuildings – barns, smokehouses, outhouses, slave cabins, fence rows and fields. On occasion a plantation would occupy the countryside, as in the case of Tudor Hall, located south of Anderson Station.

In the social hierarchy of southwestern Georgia, both small and large planters of the antebellum South were looked upon by the smaller farmers as models to aspire to. Planters generally, by means of social position and money, controlled the political systems of the county and established those social norms subscribed to by the rest of society. The small farmer and the planter supported each other in the socio-economic system that dominated the South in the years before the Civil War. When James Carter died in 1858, he left 9 children, a 303-acre farm worth \$1,200 and 6 slaves worth considerably more.<sup>17</sup>

Slavery created a unique social setting in the South. As noted by Eugene Genovese, "Cruel, unjust, exploitative, oppressive, slavery bound two peoples together in bitter antagonism while creating an organic relationship so complex and ambivalent that neither could express the simplest human feeling without reference to the other . . . The Old South, black and white, created a historically unique kind of paternalistic society."<sup>18</sup> Blacks lived closely with whites, but separately from them.

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17. Sheppard, *History of Andersonville*, 9; Futchs, *History of Andersonville*, 3; Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 23; Thomas, "Carter-Gordy", 40; Christensen, *Sumter and Lee Counties*, 6-10. For the purposes of this study, delineation between farmer, small and large planters and yeoman farmers has been taken from Elizabeth Fox Genovese's *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 32.

18. Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World The Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 3-4.

They worked together daily but remained socially distant. Black women nursed white children. Social proximity remained close, and at times, social lines blurred. Mulattos, offspring of black and white unions, formed a third sub-caste, while free blacks formed a small fourth group. The closeness of association, contrasted with the separation required by racism, created a confused and tense relationship between black and white southerners that manifested itself in both ambivalence and, often, violence. The humiliation of slavery fed daily the resentment of African bondsmen. Their response was to fight their bond through whatever subterfuge and sabotage could be safely indulged in without jeopardizing their lives. American slave revolts from 1669 on through the Civil War, especially such dramatic events as those of Toussaint L'Overture and Henri Christophe in Haiti (1794-1804); Gabriel Prosser (1800); the New Orleans revolt (1811); Denmark Vesey (1822); Nat Turner (1831) and others fueled the fears of American slaveholders. The result was a constant negative tension that profoundly affected all social relationships, black and white.<sup>19</sup>

Life in antebellum rural Georgia, as in any pioneer situation, was fraught with hard work for both master and slave. Hard work paid off for whites more often than it did for blacks. Unlike their black slaves, white social status had a chance to improve each generation, although such improvement was often hard won. IN about 1850, Wiley Carter, son of James Carter, moved from his lands on Rocky Comfort Creek in Glascock County to a farm some 8 miles north of present day Plains. The site, known as "the Battle Place" (named after a local family) contains a cemetery where Wiley Carter was buried at age 66 in 1864. By this time, the Carter clan had become substantial planters by way of both familial relationships and acquired property. Wiley Carter's farm produced some 147 bales of cotton in 1860. He left an estate of 2,400 acres of farmland, 30 slaves, and other substantial holdings to his 11 children and wife. Wiley also married well, taking Anne Ansley, daughter of a prominent Georgia family, as his first wife in 1821. Thus, the Carters had established themselves firmly as large planters in the social and economic milieu of southwest Georgia.<sup>20</sup>

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19. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, 305-307, 413-429, 588-598; Calvin D. Linton, ed. *The Bicentennial Almanac: 200 Years of America* (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Inc., 1975), 101; Richard B. Morris, ed. *Encyclopedia of American History: Bicentennial Edition*. (New York: Harper, Row and Company, 1976), 159.

20. Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 24-25; Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 23-24; Thomas, "Carter-Gordy", 40. Gary Boyd Roberts in his book, *Ancestors of the American Presidents* (By the author, 1989), on page 131 cites Noel Curren-Briggs in his article, "The Carters of Virginia: Their English Ancestry" (1979) as suggesting patrilineal kinship between President Carter and Robert "King" Carter of Virginia. However, no definitive proof of such a familial tie has been discovered by genealogists.

Additional information further illustrates their place in the social setting of the times. In addition to hard work and improved social status, other social phenomena marked the region of southwestern Georgia. Violence often rent the social fabric. Disputes often were settled by the principals involved, without the immediate benefit of outside mediation. As noted by one historian, it was a society in which "men hunted and owned guns, as casually as they owned hats or shoes." Only five years after the Creek uprising in 1836 that sent settlers fleeing to Fort McCrary at Americus, Whigs and Democrats fought it out over a local election on the courthouse square in true Jacksonian political tradition, some leaving the field of battle missing ears or parts of noses. The next year, angry farmers kidnapped Sheriff Isaac McCrary and burned the court house records to prevent public sale of their lands. Altercations between individuals might also be handled on a personal basis, like the shootout that occurred in Americus in 1857 at the corner of Jackson and Lamar Streets. The Carters were no strangers to backwoods violence. About 1840, Wiley Carter killed a man named Usry in a quarrel over a slave. Carter was acquitted in self-defense.

Twenty years later, the War Between the States illustrated Southern readiness to defend what was one's own, whether property or family. Littleberry Walker Carter, son of Wiley Carter, and James Thomas Gordy served in the Confederate Army along with other family members. Littleberry Carter, with two brothers, served throughout the war as a private in Cutt's Sumter County Flying Artillery in Virginia.<sup>21</sup>

With the establishment of Andersonville prison some 20 miles to the northeast of the Plains of Dura, the war took on a new, grisly reality for the residents of the Flint River region. In November of 1863, Confederate Secretary of War James A. Seddon instructed Captain W. Sidney Winder to select a prison site in southwestern Georgia, preferably in the Americus or Fort Valley vicinity. Here prisoners could be removed from the main theater of war and could more easily be fed from the surrounding countryside. Property owners protested at Radium Springs; attempts to locate the facility at Magnolia Springs also met with opposition from members of a Primitive Baptist Church in the area. A site some 1600 feet east of Anderson Station depot was finally chosen. The village of 20 people had changed its name to Andersonville in the 1850s at the behest of the U.S. Post Office so that it would not become confused with Anderson, South Carolina. Named for the

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21. Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 24-25; Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 23-24; Thomas, "Carter-Gordy", 40; Anderson, "Chronology", n.p.

superintendent of the Southwestern Railroad, John W. Anderson, the village represented the hopes that the introduction of railroad technology promised the area. Little did surrounding residents such as Wesley Turner and Benjamin Dykes realize when they sold farmland to the Confederate Army, that the well-watered parcels would become a prisoner of war camp for 32,000 federal soldiers, 12,912 of whom, over 15 months time, would die as a result of their incarceration. From February 14, 1864 to May 5, 1865, Andersonville Prison became a compound of filth, disease and death. The prison, designed for 10,000 occupants, was completely inadequate. Prisoners slept outside with little protection, save ragged tents and makeshift shelters known as "sheebangs". Water was polluted; medical facilities were inadequate; death and disease were rampant. After the war, the commandant, Confederate Brigadier General John H. Winder, died before Union authorities could charge him with misconduct. The officer in charge of the prison interior, Captain Henry Wirz, although technically protected under surrender agreements, was later hanged for war crimes in Washington, D.C. by Union General Lew Wallace and a federal military commission. His trial, sentencing and execution occupied one day.<sup>22</sup>

The psychological and social effects of Andersonville on the surrounding Sumter County community has never been completely assessed. Whether operations such as Tudor Hall plantation, down the road from Andersonville, contributed to supplies for the post, or whether surrounding farmers found a market for goods is unknown. Two things can be documented, however. Three hundred and twenty-nine prisoners successfully escaped from Andersonville; a greater number escaped but were returned to the prison. The Georgia Reserves, organized in 1864 to answer the need for Confederate soldiers, guarded the prison. They were described as untrained and undisciplined, comprised of boys as young as 14 and men as old as 70. Angry, nervous and trigger-happy, they shot prisoners indiscriminately. Confederate regulars, appalled by the actions, wrote to officials including President Davis, but with little response.

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22. Futch, *History of Andersonville*, 1-10, 15-19. Wirz and Andersonville became "bloody shirt" issues for both Northern and Southern politicians after the war. Figures regarding number of prisoners and deaths vary somewhat; National Park Service brochures claim 45,000 prisoners; Futch claims 13,000 deaths. Except for one other soldier, Wirz was the only Confederate tried and executed for war crimes by the United States military. As in the case of the trial and execution of the alleged conspirators in the Lincoln assassination, the action reflected a dangerous mentality on the part of Union Radicals that threatened the entire system of justice in the United States. While the monstrosity of Andersonville cannot be denied, the camp reflected conditions found in both Union and Confederate prisons throughout the country during the period. Union installations at Rock Island and Camp Douglas, both in Illinois, also had high death rates. To quote historians J.G. Randall and David Donald, "The sickening story of Andersonville . . . is not to be set down, in the manner of lurid prison literature, as a chapter in Confederate cruelty; it is the tragedy of an impossible situation forced by the barbarity of war." (See J.G. Randall and David Donald, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* [Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1969], 337-338, 536, 643-644.)

Some historians believe that the existence of such an installation, the interaction of the Sumter County community with the installation and the effect of escaped prisoners in the remote Georgia countryside presumably had a considerable effect on the mentalities of the surrounding communities. After the war, local citizens such as Ambrose Spencer, John Lane Peek and J.J. Easterline, recalled the effects of the installation on the surrounding community. Residents of southwestern Georgia feared Sherman's troops and the revenge they might exact because of the atrocities of Andersonville; many were convinced they would not spare "man, woman or child in all South-West Georgia." As Eliza Frances Andrews, (the first American woman to be elected to the International Academy of Literature and Science) noted in January of 1865 after having passed through Andersonville, "It is dreadful. My heart aches for the poor wretches, Yankees though they are, and I am afraid God will suffer some terrible retribution to fall upon us for letting such things happen." Even today, local residents such as Pete Godwin, Jr., continue to recall the stories about relatives' interaction with the prison and the community at large. It is reasonable to assume that the Carter family had similar family experiences concerning Andersonville. Over one hundred years later, Jimmy Carter would be instrumental in the establishment of Andersonville as a National Historic Site.<sup>23</sup>

As with slavery, a conflicting, ambivalent mentality developed in the South concerning Andersonville, one of both sorrowful penance and righteous indignation. The controversy over the management of the prison certainly colored feelings in the surrounding community. The general consensus of even Confederate veterans of the region was that the Andersonville episode was a blot on Southern honor. Wirz, painted as a monster by federal officials after the war, remains a controversial figure even today. The United Daughters of the Confederacy erected a monument to him in Andersonville in 1909; however, as late as 1958, the Georgia State Legislature refused to vote funds to repair the monument.<sup>24</sup> Andersonville became a part of the gothic legend of the South, tinged with shame and fear of retribution. Wartime horror, the participation of the community in those horrors, and the anger, fear and guilt fueled by memories of those years continued to color the culture of southwestern Georgia and the Flint River region in the years after the War Between the States. The defeat of civil war now accompanied the previous

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23. Brochure, "Historic Trebor Plantation" (No date or place of publication), n.p.; Futch, *History of Andersonville*, 49, 55-57, 116-118; Pete Godwin, Jr., conversation with William Patrick O'Brien, NPS, February 12, 1991; Sheppard, *Andersonville Georgia*, 40-44. The question regarding Andersonville's effect on the mentalities of the surrounding populations is an intriguing one and one that should be more fully explored through additional research.

24. Futch, *History of Andersonville*, 120-121.

pride and conquest of an earlier generation in the minds of the Sumter County community. As they had sowed with the Creeks so had they reaped with the Yankees. The Plains of Dura, recovering from the war, along with Magnolia Springs, Lebanon and other communities strove to forget the awful past and to concentrate on a brighter and more positive future.

## **FROM THE PLAINS OF DURA TO JUST PLAIN "PLAINS" (1865-1900)**

Southern communities worked hard to escape the memories of the war. Magnolia Springs reopened its Magnolia Male and Female Institute under its former director Captain G.M. Patterson with the Reverend J.R. Littlejohn and Samuel Pickens Wise. But for the most part, reconstruction in southwest Georgia was a grim business. The war had destroyed economies and undermined old social structures. The status of ex-slaves in the community, together with a debased economy made times unsure and threatening for both southern blacks and whites. Freed slaves became tenant farmers, bound to the soil in a system of economic bondage nearly as demoralizing as their former chattel status. Violence still ruled many a disagreement; Littleberry Walker Carter was shot to death in 1873 at the age of 44 in a business argument. The murderer fled the country and Carter's widow, consumed with grief, died, according to the papers, on the day of the funeral. In the late 1880s, one of Littleberry's four sons, William Archibald Carter, moved from the "Battle Place" area north of Plains to a farm southwest of present day Plains. Here, with his wife, Nina Pratt of South Carolina, he established his family of five children. In 1894, James Earl Carter, father of President Jimmy Carter, was born.<sup>25</sup>

During the period of transition from 1870 to 1890, two important events took place that fixed the life of the Flint River region for years to come. One was the advent of new technologies. The other was the end of Reconstruction and the institution of tenancy and the Jim Crow system.

Technology made its biggest impacts in transportation, agriculture, and communication. The railroad that had brought the horrors of Andersonville and its prisoners to the region in the 1860s, in the 1880s now promised to bring a new economic prosperity. The 37 mile, narrow-gauge Americus, Lumpkin and Preston Railroad established a line south of the Plains of Dura in 1884; as in countless other areas of the nation, the town fathers of The Plains of Dura moved the town

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25. Walters, *History of Plains*, 93; Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 24-25.

to the track the next year, abandoning the original settlement site. Lebanon and Magnolia Springs followed suit, leaving their townsites and joining in the new venture. A new settlement was platted on lands belonging to the estate of Mr. Carey Thomas Cox, the Wise family and additional lands owned by Mr. Milton Leander Hudson. The Plains of Dura shortened its name to Plains in the 1880s. The ideal society, the "city on the hill" that had perished in the flames of civil war was now subsumed in hopes of economic prosperity and a new world. Businessmen constructed a row of single-gabled white frame structures on the south side of the track, that in time, would be replaced by more substantial, two storied brick buildings. A well was dug in the middle of the west end of the Main Street for fresh water. A depot was constructed in 1890.<sup>26</sup>

Plains prospered, but not without difficulty. The railroad, purchased by investors in 1892 and renamed the Savannah, Americus and Montgomery in 1895, went bankrupt. The Seaboard Air line took the railroad over in 1900 and built a wide-gauge road in 1902. Four day and two night trains served the settlement. Plains incorporated in 1896, the same year that Rural Free Delivery was established by the U.S. Post Office in the Georgia countryside – the same year that the United States Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, established the legal existence of American racial policies. Dr. Burr Thomas Wise was elected the first Mayor, with L.D. Wise elected as councilman. Others serving on the council were R.S. Oliver, Edwin Timmerman and W.L. Thomas. Dr. Wise, owner and operator of the Wise Sanitarium, continued to be a force in Plains for many years.

Immediately, the new settlement established social and legal parameters to foster development. Laws adopted by the incorporated town of Plains prohibited the sale of intoxicating drinks. In 1902, permission was given to the Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company to erect poles and conductors with free use for police and fire alarms. By 1906, the village boasted a tannery, a shoe factory, a bank, a telegraph office, a school, a post office and several stores. By 1907 a City Water Works was established, and in that year a 25-year franchise was given to the Plains Telephone Company. In 1912, the Hercules Light Company of Chattanooga, Tennessee, built an electrical plant in Plains; in 1919 Plains installed a lighting system operated by a diesel-driven generator. By 1920, the little town of Plains was established as a thriving agricultural center in the Flint River Region of southwestern Georgia.<sup>27</sup>

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26. Elizabeth Barthold, et al., Historic American Building Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, *Plains Depot*, HABS No. GA-2209, 1.

27. Walters, *History of Plains*, 2-5, Borns, *People of Plains*, 4.

Agricultural technology also impacted Plains. Agriculture dominated the town; even professional people maintained farming operations in addition to their respective careers. As in years gone by, land and its ownership was still the measure of real wealth and status in the community. Agriculture continued to be important all over the state of Georgia. The Georgia Department of Agriculture, established in 1874 in an attempt to rescue Georgia's farmers from the impact of the Civil War, was the first state agricultural office established in the United States. Cotton, once the main cash crop of the region, found itself accompanied by crops such as peanuts, a plant and food crop native to South America. New methods of cultivation, fertilization, and crop rotation began to be used as scientific farming slowly took over the Old South.

But change was slow to take root. Technology and industrialism were often viewed suspiciously by southern agrarians who saw such developments as threatening to the established systems of society and government. Resistance to change was not merely a backward reaction; it was an attempt to retain control of a former way of life, a way to insure social stability.

By 1920, southwestern Georgia had changed since the days of the Civil War; however, the familiar silhouette of the black sharecropper and his mules plowing the red Georgia earth against a blue Georgia sky still dominated the rural landscape of the Flint River region. Cotton remained the cash crop, with Sumter and Lee counties producing 64,000 bales in 1910, marking the peak of cotton culture in the area. Corn remained the second most important crop.

Like the region of southwest Georgia, Plains had also changed a great deal. It had recovered from civil war, changed its name, moved from its original townsite to a new railroad and developed into a thriving agricultural center. Plains also witnessed another important development during this period. A change in the agricultural profile of the region during the first years of the 20th century forever marked its economy. In the years immediately preceding World War I, boll weevil infestation caused some farmers to look to other types of crops. About 1910 or 1911, an unknown "Yankee" planted a crop of peanuts in the Plains area as an experiment. Threshing machines not being available, his field hands picked the nuts from the plants. No one in the area, however, wanted to buy the product. Finally, Mr. Williams, a cotton merchant in Plains, bought this early crop of peanuts for seed. By 1916 several candy manufacturers were regularly coming to Plains to purchase peanuts. Cotton gins took peanuts in as a side business; the same equipment was used to crush cottonseed and peanuts for oil. In 1916, the first peanut mill in Georgia was built in Coleman in Randolph County, to the west of Plains. But cotton remained the big crop in the

region until the 1930s, peanuts being used as hog feed, sold to candy companies or used for seed. Agricultural innovation continued over the years. The Purcell Act of 1925, the Bank-Jones Act of 1935 and the Research and Marketing Act of 1946 made federal monies available for agriculture. In 1950, the newly established state agricultural experiment station at the University of Georgia at Athens created three new branch stations. With the help of William Alton Carter, Earl Carter and others one of the branch stations was located at Plains.<sup>28</sup>

Emancipation, Reconstruction and Jim Crow legislation summed up the experience for blacks of the post Civil War period. Little changed for the black farmer in the South. Economic bondage now replaced actual human slavery. Black farmers worked as sharecroppers, many continuing to live on the same farms and in the same sort of shacks their families had occupied as slaves. Buying seed and supplies on time and settling up at the end of season, most found themselves in a denigrating system of eternal debt that kept them tied to the land. Some managed to leave farms and move into settlements. Most that left southern farms, however, moved north in search of a better life. Many found conditions as bad or worse than those they had left.<sup>29</sup>

As in most American towns of the period, black and white residents of the new Plains remained segregated. Well into the 20th century, black businessmen found their ambitions served by a cluster of four small segregated stores just south of the intersection of Main and South Hudson Streets. Whites shopped at the row of large, well-ordered brick establishments on Main Street. White store owners sold to blacks on credit. In the decade after the Civil War, churches, once shared by blacks and whites who previously maintained separation by seating or time of use, split into individual churches delineated by race. Segregated medical facilities served black and white residents. Even funeral arrangements for blacks had to be made in Americus, 10 miles away.<sup>30</sup>

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28. Walters, *History of Plains*, 81; William Patrick O'Brien: Conversation with Charles Hicks, Plains, Georgia, 7 June 1990; Michael O'Brien, *The Idea of the American South, 1920-1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 14-15; David Thelen, *Paths of Resistance: Tradition and Dignity in Industrializing Missouri* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 57-86; Merrit Roe Smith, *Harper's Ferry Armory and the New Technology* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 328-335; Christensen, *Sumter and Lee Counties*, 10; Willard Range, *A Century of Georgia Agriculture* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1954), 239.

29. Borns, *People of Plains*, 28.

30. W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 135; O'Brien, Conversation with Jewell Wiley, Plains Georgia, April 18, 1990; Survey: "Middle Flint Historical Survey", TMs, no date, n.p.; Edwin C. Bearss, Chief Historian, National Park Service, Oral History Interview with Pete Godwin, Plains, Georgia, 20 December 1985, 27. Hereafter cited as Bearss, Oral History Interview, etc.

Blacks wished to access the community power structure in their status of newly enfranchised citizens of the republic; whites were determined to deny them such access. For a brief time, newly freed male slaves achieved some rights. But within fifteen years after the end of the Civil War many of the attitudes that drove the economic and social environment in the South remained *status quo ante bellum*. In town and on the farm, racial prejudice intensified as economic and social competition intensified. Throughout the South, the night-riding Ku Klux Klan of Nathan Bedford Forrest attempted to guarantee, along with tenancy and sharecropping, the continuation of the ante-bellum social structure. The ambivalent relationships of black and white continued.

But Black society nevertheless survived and a strong work ethic maintained itself in the black community. Other signs of community could also be observed. A Black militia unit, the "City Blues," was organized in 1874. In 1885, the Franklin Square Library, Americus' first public library for Black citizens, was opened. Blacks founded their own newspapers in Americus in 1886 and 1891, the *Americus Monitor* and the *Americus Tribune*. But as the freedoms won in the Civil War faded into the Jim Crow era, the brief hope offered black citizens of Sumter County quickly faded. Throughout the South, formal Klan activity continued at the turn of the century as Jim Crow laws became solidly established and lynching of blacks mounted with terrifying intensity. Nationally, the 1896 Supreme Court decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* gave legal voice to the concept of "separate but equal." Through the first decades of the 20th century and into the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan, now controlled by middle and lower-middle class interests, continued its racist agenda. In 1936 it was noted that Mr. Sam Chapman constituted the first black man to serve on a jury in Sumter County in 50 years. Even public auctions of livestock were strictly segregated in Sumter County as late as 1956. Racial violence was common and the old ways continued.<sup>31</sup>

## THE ARRIVAL AND PROGRESS OF THE CARTERS (1900-1920)

The Carter family, already well established in the prevalent regional social and economic orders, tempered by civil war and personal tragedy, and eagerly looking toward a new and prosperous

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31. E. Merton Coulter, *A Short History Of Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 371-372; Christensen, *Lee and Sumter Counties*, 70; Walters, *History of Plains*, 31; Borns, *People of Plains*, 29; Anderson, "Chronology", n.p; Clifton L. Taulbert, *Once Upon A Time When We Were Colored* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Council Oak Press, 1989), 39-40. The first black city councilperson was elected to office in 1972. Today, in 1990, two blacks sit on the City Council in Plains.

life, moved into the new community of Plains about 1905. This was the Faulknerian South; much of what William Faulkner wrote concerning such fictitious locales and people as Frenchman's Bend, Will Varner, Flem Snopes and the change from old to new orders was the reality of turn-of-the-century Plains. William Archibald Carter, known as Billy, died violently as had his father Littleberry. In 1903, Billy, successful sawmill owner and farmer, was killed in an argument concerning ownership of an office desk. His son, William Alton Carter became head of the family, and got a job in Plains at a general store in 1905. His brother, James Earl, went to the consolidated white school in Plains and later attended the Riverside Military Academy in Gainesville, Georgia. He completed the 10th grade, the most advanced education for any member of the Carter clan since their arrival in Georgia over one hundred years earlier. At 17, he left Plains to work in Texas as a cowboy, returning 2 years to invest in an ice house in town. In 1917, James Earl was drafted into the army. After the war, he returned to Plains, speculating in various types of ventures. In 1921 he met Lillian Gordy, a nurse at the Wise Sanitarium, a local hospital and clinic run by the Wise family of Plains. The hospital had just moved into new, modern facilities. James Earl Carter became a member of the Board of Directors.<sup>32</sup>

Lillian Gordy represented the emergence of the new American professional woman of the 1920s. Not content with the traditional, male-defined "wifely" role, she pursued her own education and career. Her arrival, and that of other young, single female nursing staff in a small southern town evidently caused some friction; at least one local historian noted that the arrival of the nursing staff caused "some jealousy" among the local women. But, for the most part, the Registered Nurse program of the Wise hospital quickly became part of the Plains scene. Most students were local girls with families in the area.

Lillian Gordy was no exception. She was a product of southwest Georgia. Her grandfather, James Thomas Gordy had fought for the Confederacy in 1864. His son, James Jackson "Jim Jack" Gordy, a tall, imposing, likable man, who enjoyed the rough and tumble world of politics, did not entirely entertain the usual social and political views of his contemporaries. Jim Jack Gordy was a farmer, schoolteacher, and postmaster. Like the majority of his southern contemporaries, he was a Democrat. His ability to predict political outcomes was well known.

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32. Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 24, 28-29; Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 24-25; Steven Hahn, *The Roots Of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 170-171. Hereafter referred to as Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*; Barthold, *Wise Sanitarium*, HABS No. GA-2213, 3.

Jim Jack Gordy was, in many ways, an anomaly. He embraced many conflicting ideas and opinions. Racism was a way of life in southwestern Georgia; but, according to Lillian Carter, Gordy regularly entertained the local A.M.E. church pastor in his home, discussing a variety of topics with him. On the other hand, he named his son, Tom Watson Gordy, after the popular southern racist-populist politician. Gordy became involved in patronage politics, although he did not run for office. He finally became a doorkeeper at the state capitol.

Lillian Carter followed her father's example. She became a woman politically astute and independent of spirit. Her career as a nurse probably scandalized some Plains residents – it was a male-dominated period in which professional women were suspect. Her racial attitudes were a legacy from Jim Jack Gordy. "My feeling towards blacks are from him" remarked Lillian Carter in later years. Earl Carter did not share his prospective wife's progressive views. He was a product of the Old South and supported the established social and economic structures. Nevertheless, he married Lillian Gordy on September 26, 1923 at the Plains Baptist Church. "Miss Lillian" was 25; "Mr. Earl" was 29. They set up housekeeping in the second floor of a late Victorian home on the north side of the tracks.<sup>33</sup>

## THE WORLD OF THE CARTERS AND JIMMY'S CHILDHOOD (1920-1941)

Mr. Earl's career and the Plains community boomed in the 1920s, despite the post-war depression of 1921 and the economic agricultural problems that plagued the country during the 1920s.<sup>34</sup> The former cotton culture, although still strong, was beginning to change. Other crops began to attract farmers' attention in the region. By 1920, Americus, 10 miles from Plains, had its own peanut sheller. By the late 1930s, specialized peanut shelling plants had been built south of Plains, in Leesburg in Lee County.

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33. Mazlish, *Jimmy Carter*, 25-30; Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 25-27; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, 12 May 1988, 340-41; Walters, *History of Plains*, 101.

34. Agricultural and economic problems worsened throughout the nation during the 1920s. Legislation passed in 1923 (Agricultural Credits Act, 4 March) and 1929 (Extraordinary Congressional Session: Re: Farm Cooperatives 16 April) are two illustrations of the dire straits that farmers found themselves in nationwide. That Earl Carter was able to succeed in such an adverse national environment underscores his ability both as a manager and a businessman.

Earl Carter invested in a variety of related business ventures, including cotton, timberland, peanuts, a grocery and a dry cleaning shop. According to his brother Alton's recollections, "everything he touched turned to gold." Mr. Earl did well. White farmers in the region regularly borrowed money from him. Earl and Lillian Carter moved from the second floor apartment to first floor rooms in a house owned by a man named Emmett Cook. On October 1, at 7 A.M., 1924, their first child, James Earl Carter, Jr. was born at the Wise Sanitarium. A daughter, Gloria, was born in 1926, followed by another daughter, Ruth, in 1929. Another son, William Alton Carter III (Billy), was born in 1937.

After Jimmy's birth Earl and Lillian Carter moved two more times to locations on Bond Street. Finally, in 1928, Earl Carter moved his family from Plains to Archery, two and one-half miles outside of Plains on the old Preston-Americus Road, purchasing a house and farm from a family named Plexico. Between twenty and twenty-five black families lived in the Archery vicinity, and a black industrial college was located there, as well. Jimmy Carter was 4 years old. It was this farm that would serve as home to Jimmy Carter until he left for a naval career at Annapolis. His earliest memory is that of his father letting him in a window to open the door the day they moved to the farm; the key to the house had been left behind.<sup>35</sup>

The Carter farm in Sumter County consisted of about 360 acres; the Carters also had additional farm property over the line in Webster County. Corn, peanuts and cotton were the main crops, with auxiliary crops of pecans and watermelons and additional products like milk, meats and vegetables. Earl and Jimmy Carter planted the large pecan grove adjacent to the house in the late 1930s when Jimmy was about 12 years old. Other bushes, such as kumquats were also planted by the family. The yard had plants and trees such as crepe myrtle, mulberry, chinaberry and pecan.<sup>36</sup>

The house was a white clapboard structure, built in a bungalow style popular in the years after World War I. It had a low hipped roof and a large porch across the front, that was later screened

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35. Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 28; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, 11 May 1988, 166-67; Barthold, *Jimmy Carter Boyhood Home*, HABS No. Ga-245, 2-3; Christensen, *Lee and Sumter Counties*, 118-119; Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*, 170-171; O'Brien, Telephone conversation with Martin Elzy, Carter Presidential Library, 5 December 1990.

36. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, 11 May 1988, 179, 180, 181, 182, 187, 214; Borns, *People of Plains*, 89.

in by the Carters. A service porch also crossed the back of the house. The building was set up on brick piers. Two stone chimneys carried on the interior walls served fireplaces on the northwest and southeast sides of the building. Windows were typically one-over-one light double hung units. The windows on the front of the house were two-over-two lights, wider than the others. The floor plan was simple, with rooms built around a wide central hall running from the front to the back of the house. The formal parlor and main bedroom was located at the front of the house; three bedrooms were located on the southeast side. The dining room and kitchen followed the parlor on the northwest side. The house had no plumbing; Earl Carter would later add an indoor toilet and makeshift shower consisting of a bucket with holes and a sheet metal pan and drain that ran into the yard. Jimmy Carter's bedroom had no heat. Electricity was not available until 1937 with the advent of the Rural Electrification Act. The radio was operated by a battery.<sup>37</sup>

Various outbuildings, including an outhouse, smoke house, mule barn, chicken house, hog lot and blacksmithing shed made up the main buildings. "Our yard was always full of chickens and ducks," remembered President Carter. Geese roamed the barnyard and milk cows and mules inhabited the barns. "The most formidable animal on the place – the only ones that I was afraid of – was the geese," stated Carter. "I ordinarily had a calf or a couple of pigs that I was raising for show purposes and Future Farmers of America projects. And I'd generally have maybe 2 acres of peanuts that would be mine . . . and sometimes 2 or 3 acres of corn". A garage was also in the back, with a chicken pen next to it. Next to the chicken pen was the smokehouse where his father cured hams and sausages. A storage house was next to the smoke house, behind which was a pen where Carter kept his calf and hogs. Dogs and cats also roamed the farmyard. A windmill with a tank enabled the family to obtain an indoor toilet. Water pumps were located in front of the smoke house and on the back porch. Between the house and barn was a "lane". On the other side of the commissary was a large garden that the lot man, Jack Clark, tended. The Clarks and the Carters shared the vegetables from the garden. The barn lot was the center of farm life. On the other side of the barns was the dip trench, where livestock was driven a couple of times a year to cut down on insect infestation. The trench was about 6 feet deep. A privy was also located behind the main house. Mules were kept behind the barn in a three acre enclosure. close by, was

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37. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, 11 May 1988, 167-169, 173, 187, 181, 197-198, 201, 204-205; Borns, *People of Plains*, 89; President Jimmy Carter, Draft corrections, Special History Study, Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District, 29.

the corn crib where corn was shelled for feed. In the mornings, each hand would head for the lane by the mule lot to catch his mules and begin the day's work.<sup>38</sup>

"Daddy was a very aggressive, competent farmer," remembered Jimmy Carter. Mr. Earl did not work in the fields himself. He also owned farmland across the tracks, on the other side of the Seaboard Rail Line. The main community events of the year centered around hog killing in the fall, when 20 or more of the animals would be butchered each cold day, the parts being divided up between black and white farm community members, and the free Fourth of July barbecues sponsored by the Carters for the Archery community, during which 3 or 4 hogs and a couple of goats would be cooked. Women worked the fat into lard in large washpots in the yard during hog killing. Souse meat, sausage, fried brains and eggs, liver, brunswick stew, smoked hams – all such foods centered around butchering time. Milking was a daily routine, and Carter remembers the "click, click, click" of the milk separator, the way the sound changed when the milk finally separated and the skim milk called "blue John" that was fed to the hogs.

In addition to being a farmer and businessman, Mr. Earl was an innovator and inventor. He designed a plow that, according to his son Jimmy, the Rome Plow Company later manufactured for sale. He made and bottled cane syrup and tomato catsup on the farm. Mr. Earl grew everything that there was a market for at the time – watermelons, sweet potatoes, black-eyed peas, cotton, corn, tomatoes, peanuts. The vegetable parch yielded squash, peas, cabbage, Irish potatoes sweet potatoes and beans. Corn was plowed until it reached the height of a mule's head. The hours of work made for long, farm days, from sunup to sundown. Breakfast was substantial, dinner was at noon and supper occurred after work in the evening. The main meal was at noon.<sup>39</sup>

Like many other homes in the region, the Carter house initially had no grass lawn. White sand, trucked in (on wagons) to cover the yard, was swept regularly. A small, semi-circular drive was located at the front of the house where the Carters planted a magnolia tree. Spiraea bushes also graced the yard; President Carter remembers this because it was from those bushes that Mr. Earl used to cut his switches. It was a typical rural Georgia farm of the time, with the exception of two

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38. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, 11 May 1988, 170-172, 176-177, 237.

39. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs Jimmy Carter, 11 May 1988, 173, 192-194, 199, 193, 202, 214, 215, 223, 225, 226, 231.

things. Earl Carter graded a tennis court for himself and his family and kept it scraped smooth with "some mules and a 4" x 6" beam just east of the house. The court had a wire screen about ten feet high on each end for stray balls. Adjacent to the tennis court stood a small, clapboard, single-gabled store or commissary. Earl Carter brought surplus "hard" goods out to this building from his store in town to sell to the black sharecroppers who worked his farm. He also sold hams, pork shoulders, sausage, cured in the smokehouse with oak, hickory and sassafras chips. Overalls, shoes, comforters, snuff, tobacco, flour, sugar, meal, castor oil, homemade syrup – all the various rural necessities were supplied. Sharecroppers bought their goods on credit, according to President Carter:

There were. . . [a]. . . few sharecroppers that worked on the farm and they would ordinarily get so much cash – "draw", they called it, a week. And they would come get their cash draw and we'd make tickets on the stuff they bought and in the fall, when settling time [came] , the sharecroppers would settle up and pay what they owed for the year and get the rest in cash.<sup>40</sup>

It was here that Mr Earl settled with his help on payday, Saturday afternoons. The store stayed open on Saturday afternoon. "We generally worked till Saturday at noon, everybody did", recalled Carter. "We all worked in the store. It was a busy time on Saturday afternoons".<sup>41</sup>

Jimmy worked in the fields with his father's black employees, plowing, hoeing, "mopping" cotton with a mixture of molasses, arsenic, and water (a job that he hated), tending the farm animals – cows, guinea hens, geese, pigs – or feeding the dogs, his pony, Lady, and his Future Farmers of America stock. When wet weather made work impossible, he would take off for the woods, going hunting for doves or fishing in the nearby creeks.<sup>42</sup>

The days of Jimmy Carter's childhood moved into months and years. Seasons blended into comfortable progressions of time. Each had its own feeling and special sense and events came and went as the cycles of farm life moved from spring to summer, fall to winter. Earl Carter hired a

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40. Barthold, *Jimmy Carter Boyhood Home*, HABS No. Ga-245, 2; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, 11 May 1988, 175.

41. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, 11 May 1988, 167-169, 173, 178, 187, 181, 197-198, 201, 204-205; Borns, *People of Plains*, 89.

42. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 228-230; Borns, *People of Plains*, 89.

Mr. Valentine to build a mule barn; sweet potatoes were buried with pine straw in mounds to keep for the winter; Rachel Clark moved down the rows of cotton, picking as much as 250 pounds a day. Jimmy Carter, barefoot and clad in only blue jean overalls without a shirt, worked with Rachel in the fields. His competitiveness showed even then; when Mr. Earl asked his son why he "put his sheets so close to Rachel's" Rachel Clark answered "It makes him pick more. I's helping him to pick cotton."<sup>43</sup> When weather was bad, Jimmy ran off to Hog Branch to fish with Rachel Clark or swim with A.D. Davis and his other black friends. In the spring, fields were plowed. In the summer cotton was picked. In the fall hogs were shot and butchered, the carcasses scalded and scraped, the intestines scrubbed for sausage and chitterlings, and the heads boiled for "souse". In the mild winter, equipment was repaired. Daily life rang with the field songs of sharecroppers, the muted sounds of soft summer rains or the mournful sounds of winter birds. The farm was a knowable cycle of birth, maturity, harvest, death and rebirth. "This is where the family lived and this was the center of our life," noted President Carter.<sup>44</sup>

The Carter farm in Archery consisted of about 360 acres. Earl Carter's total land holdings consisted of some 4,000 acres worked by approximately 200 black men and women, some who sharecropped, others who worked their own farms and hired on to work the Carter operation, all of whom called him "Mr. Earl." Pay on the farm during Depression years was \$1.25 for men, .75 for women and .25 a day for children. Each day on the Carter farm began about 4:00 AM when Jack Clark, a black man and the "lot man" or farm supervisor, rang a large bell located in the vicinity of the blacksmith shed.<sup>45</sup> Sharecroppers like Cy and Sue from across the road sang as they worked the fields. Gloria Carter Spann recalled

They worked for the Downers . . . they lived over there and she was the lead singer. They would pick cotton and she would sing and they would follow their

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43. Borns, *People of Plains*, 93.

44. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 5, 170, 171, 184, 193, 199-200, 226, 228-230, 238; Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 30, 35-40; Borns, *People of Plains*, 89, 91-93.

45. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 5-6, 171, 226, 237; Mazlish/Diamond, 30, 35-40; Bearss, Interview with Gloria Carter Spann, Plains Georgia, 7 December 1988, 20; Borns, *People of Plains*, 89. Miss Lillian Carter recalled the number of sharecroppers who worked the Carter farms in Webster County as "two or three hundred". (See Borns, *People of Plains*.)

singing . . . they did things by rhythm out in the field . . . it was just beautiful . . . When they were chopping cotton, she was the high soprano.<sup>46</sup>

Sharecroppers still sang the work songs of their fathers and grandfathers as they labored in the fields. In nearby regions of Georgia and Alabama, "ring shouts", a type of dance having African cultural ties, were still performed by local groups as an important part of the region's cultural legacy. Blues and white folk music added to the rich tapestry of regional musical styles. Jimmy Carter heard the music of southwestern Georgia. He noted its various messages. They became a part of his cultural experience.<sup>47</sup>

Jimmy Carter spent much time with lot man and sharecropper Jack Clark and his wife Rachel, as Mr. Earl's farm and town operations involved a variety of small home industries, including sugar cane and syrup refining, butchering, seed brokerage and related businesses, leaving little spare time. Jack and Rachel Clark enjoyed a certain status on the Carter farm: "She was an aristocrat . . . Rachel Clark was not the kind of woman that mother would ever have asked to do housework",<sup>48</sup> remembered President Carter. "I was the lead hand," Rachel Clark noted years later. "I carried the crowd for him. I was the head person in the field. He [Mr. Earl] looked to me."<sup>49</sup> Black women worked the fields as well as men. Jimmy Carter played cards with the Clarks, ate with them, and stayed in their home when both parents were away. Jack Clark showed him how to hunt quail. Rachel nursed members of the family when they took sick. Miss Lillian, working long shifts as a "private duty" nurse, sometimes had little time other than to come home to rest for a few hours; Jimmy and his sisters jokingly referred to the desk in the front parlor as "mother", as that was where Mrs. Carter left notes and instructions for her children. Black women with names like Annie Mae or Bertha managed the kitchen and the black foreman Jack Clark built the fires in the stoves each day and brought in the day's supply of wood. Laundry was sent to the laundress down the road. "I never did have a clothesline, you know," recalled Lillian Carter.

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46. Bearss, Oral History Interview with Gloria Carter Spann, Plains Georgia, 7 December 1988, 89-91.

47. George Pullen Jackson, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands: The Story of the Fasola Folk, Their Songs, Singings, and "Buckwheat Notes"* (New York: Dover Publications, 1965), 70-112; O'Brien, Telephone conversation with Joe Wilson, Executive Director, National Council for the Traditional Arts, Washington, D.C., 20 September, 1990; Bearss, Oral History Interview with Gloria Carter Spann, Plains Georgia, 7 December 1988, 89-91. The musical traditions of the region continue to this day; according to Joe Wilson of the National Council for the Traditional Arts, Precious Bryant, a blues singer of national reputation, is from the Sumter County region.

48. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 228-229.

49. Borns, *People of Plains*, 92.

"We took our clothes to the wash woman." Strong, independent women with minds of their own were very much a part of the childhood of Jimmy Carter. Years later he would build on that experience, noting the importance of equal partnership and consideration in his own marriage.<sup>50</sup>

The paternalistic tenancy system was still in place in the South and the Archery farm of the Carters reflected that system. Only one other white family lived in the Archery community. The majority of Carter's boyhood friends were black, but the relationships reflected the paternalism inherent in the social structure. A.D. Davis, Carter's best friend until he was 14, recalled that although he and Carter played together, Jimmy had to go first, and "was expected to 'star'". Carter himself remembers vividly the Max Schmeling/Joe Louis fight in June of 1938. Black sharecroppers crowded the Carter yard and Mr. Earl put the radio on the window sill. When it was announced that Louis had won, the black crowd in the yard quietly removed themselves to the other side of the road. "When they got to the house . . . you could have heard them for 5 miles celebrating Louis' victory," said President Carter.<sup>51</sup>

Earl Carter's politics were also indicative of the times. Earl Carter supported Governor Gene Talmadge and, later, his son, Herman. Building on the earlier racist image of populist Tom Watson, Talmadge and his machine illustrated the politics that dominated not only the South but the entire American nation in the years between the World Wars. Talmadge distrusted both blacks and urban dwellers, counting on the largely rural white vote for support. Earl Carter argued heatedly with his wife's father over politics; he opposed Franklin Roosevelt and his policies in the South. However, he did not join the Ku Klux Klan or similar racist groups. Lillian Carter noted that her husband Earl was not as strong a segregationist as most other men they knew. Earl Carter was a man of his times. He was a white, middle-class Georgia Democrat, a "moderate" in matters of politics and race. As a school board member and state representative in the early 1950s, he continued to support white-controlled economic, political and social systems.

But, as with many southern men of his station, there was another side, a private side to Earl Carter, as well, that transcended accepted social systems. Ruth Jackson, daughter of a black

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50. Borns, *People of Plains*, 91; Bearss, Oral History Interview with Gloria Carter Spann, Plains Georgia, 7 December 1988, 20; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 4-5, 171, 184, 193, 199-200, 226, 228-230, 238; Tulbert, *Once Upon A Time When We Were Colored*, 40-41, 119-125.

51. Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 22, 27-40; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, 11 May 1988, 182.

sharecropper and neighbors of the Carters, tenderly remembered Mr. Earl preparing a wooden coffin for her baby brother who died of diphtheria; Mr. Earl's daughter, Gloria, remembered the tears he shed as he nailed the boards together. When Mr. Earl died, Jimmy and his sister Ruth went from house to house to notify people of his father's death. "We went to black and white," Ruth Carter remembered. They were amazed to find that their father had quietly helped families of both races with living expenses and money for college. Jimmy was profoundly touched by the information. Through his tears, he told Ruth, "I want to be a man like my father."<sup>52</sup>

Jimmy Carter's childhood and young manhood on the farm in Plains centered around four elements. One was the seasonal cycle of farm life. The other three were the interrelated institutions of family, church and school. Jimmy Carter's relationship with his immediate family reflected a group that was at once independent of each other yet closely tied to one another as well. Carter remembers his father as strict; sometimes corporal punishments such as whippings were meted out for serious transgressions. The transgressions were the usual childhood sins of hookey or sibling wrangles, mostly with his sister Gloria. Carter remembers about a dozen such whippings and noted that although he "deserved them" he "resented their severity" as a child. Year later, he described his father as "tough." However, Carter also remembers a time as a boy when he lost a string of fish he was watching for his Dad. Diving into the water, looking for the lost stringer, he became more and more frustrated, knowing his father would be angry. In tears, and soaking wet, he heard his father call to him asking what the trouble was. When Earl Carter saw how mortified and upset his son was over the loss, he told him to let the fish go and put his arms around Jimmy as he climbed from the creek. Earl Carter had a heart as well as a temper.<sup>53</sup>

Miss Lillian, busy with her nursing career, was not always as available as her family might have liked. The Carter children's reference to the desk where she left notes as "mother," was a family joke that Miss Lillian did not always find funny. Like other white people of her position, Miss Lillian had help to run the household. She encouraged Jimmy's reading and intellectual pursuits with the same intensity that Earl Carter encouraged his interest in hunting and fishing. Both parents demanded adherence to duties and chores; however, Miss Lillian could be manipulated

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52. Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 22, 27-40; Bearss, Oral History Interview with Ruth Jackson, Plains, Georgia, 20 December, 1985, 7-9; Jim Small, Ranger, Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District, Oral History Interview with Gloria Carter Spann, Plains, Georgia, 7 December 1988, 72.

53. Jimmy Carter, "In Praise of Fishing Holes: The Vivid Memories of J.E. Carter", *Time*, Vol. 11, May 1988, 171.

by her children if they were reading. She hated to interrupt any of them; reading was also encouraged at the dinner table.<sup>54</sup>

As for his brothers and sisters, Jimmy had status as the eldest child and only male until brother Billy's birth in 1937. His sisters, Gloria and Ruth, two and five years younger, respectively, had the usual childhood relationships with their older brother, although his relationship with Gloria was decidedly stormy at times. Once, in a fit of anger, Jimmy shot Gloria in the rear with a BB gun, for which he was duly punished. By the time Billy Carter was born, Jimmy was 13. A certain competition developed between the brothers, but they always remained close, even in the most difficult of times.<sup>55</sup>

The concept of family had various meanings for Jimmy Carter. It was, as Bruce Mazlish and Edwin Diamond have noted, "not just southern and white – it was southwest Georgia rural."<sup>56</sup> Family meant his father, Earl, and mother, Lillian, his sisters, Gloria and Ruth and, later, his brother, Billy, certainly. But it also meant the Archery community, Tom and Rachel Clark, and A.D. Davis, although these relationships were proscribed to some extent because of the prejudices of the times. Nevertheless, they were important and just as binding in their way as were the ties of his blood family. As Gloria Carter Spann noted, the Carter cook, Annie Mae "more or less raised us, all of us."<sup>57</sup> Family also meant, in a paternalistic way, the sharecroppers and tenants who worked the farm. Family even included the more disreputable elements, such as the local moonshiner. "Somebody had to provide a high quality whiskey," the President wryly remembered.<sup>58</sup> Family included the people of Plains as well, and of Sumter County. The Carter family, having resided for over 100 years in the region, were related by blood to many in Sumter County. Family meant community, a paternal community in which everyone's place was understood and marked and in which there was little room for change. Family meant discipline;

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54. Small, Oral History Interview with Gloria Carter Spann, December 7, 1988, 20-21; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, December 8, 1988, 74 and May 11, 1988, 7, 200; Borns, *People of Plains*, 91.

55. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter May 8, 1988, 185; Billy Carter, Billy, 18, 19, 36-39.

56. Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 18-26.

57. Bearss, Oral History Interview with Gloria Carter Spann, Plains Georgia, 7 December 1988, 21.

58. Bearss, Oral History Interviews with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains Georgia, 11-12 May 1988, 240.

Carter remembers that he never considered doing other than what his father asked and also remembers the whippings he received when he transgressed, both at home and at school. Family also meant high expectations of members in the southern tradition of "being somebody", as noted by journalist Fred Graham. "The message was that much was expected of us . . . and that anything less than dazzling success would be abject failure."<sup>59</sup> Family meant both law and security, again, a knowable, understandable world in which everything was ordered and set, a world in which to excel was to succeed.

Affection for family members, whether blood-related or extended, was expressed in a system of nicknames. Jimmy Carter's father, Earl, was known locally as "Turk"; his brother, Alton, as "Buddy". Jimmy's father nicknamed him "Hotshot" and his brother Billy "Buckshot." Sister Gloria was known as "Go-Go"; Ruth as "Boopy-doop." Cousin Hugh was known as "Beedie." A.D. Davis was known as "Knock." Nicknames reflected closeness and affection. As one grew to adulthood, however, they seemed to become the purview of males who could afford to compromise their dignity through the use of such monikers. Women, whose power in the community was hard won, seldom held on to such undignified childhood appellations. Women who retained nicknames generally used those that underscored their traditional position in the community. The term "Miss" was used as an honorific for both married and unmarried women, regardless of marital status. As examples, Rosalynn Carter's mother was known as "Mama Allie" or "Miss Allie." Lillian Carter was, however, known only as "Miss Lillian."<sup>60</sup>

Set on the foundation of family, augmenting it, giving it philosophical meaning and purpose outside the genetic, biological, and tribal definitions, was the church. Like many men of his class and age, Earl Carter observed the accepted proprieties. According to his son Jimmy, he was a deacon and taught Sunday school. Jimmy Carter later became a deacon in the Baptist Church. The "church" in Sumter County consisted of American Protestantism founded in the traditions of the Second Great Awakening of the 1820s. Fundamental, and based in notions of revival and

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59. Bearss, Oral History Interviews with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains Georgia, 11-12 May 1988, 133-134, 141-144, 239-40, 246-248; Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 18-26; Fred Graham in *Happy Talk: Confessions of a TV Journalist* as quoted in *Reader's Digest* (July 1990), 25. Graham quotation provided courtesy of Reverend Dan Ariail, Plains, Georgia.

60. Hugh Carter and Frances Spatz-Leighton, *Cousin Beedie and Cousin Hot: My Life With the Carter Family of Plains, Georgia by Hugh Carter as told to Frances Spatz-Leighton* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), 5-7, 31.

evangelism, the main congregations in Plains were Baptist and Methodist. A smaller Lutheran Church, the center of the region's "Plains Synod," also existed, but had little influence on Carter and his boyhood. Black churches consisted of an African Methodist Episcopal congregation and Baptist churches. White Baptists comprised the controlling economic and social interests in Plains, with Methodists following a distant second. Both churches were "every other Sunday congregations" – and many, when their own group did not meet, evidently attended the other church on alternate Sundays. The church reflected and reinforced community standards and class structures. It approved and defended racism as a matter of course. It provided the core of social activity for the community through Baptist youth organizations such as the BYPU. "Pound parties" (to which everyone brought a pound of food to be shared), dances, celebrations – all centered in the Baptist and Methodist churches in town.<sup>61</sup>

The music of the southwest Georgia Baptist church also played an important role in Jimmy Carter's childhood and adolescence in Plains. Plains was adjacent to the "Sacred Harp Belt," a region in which a unique type of religious singing developed early in the 19th century. Characterized by a system of shaped notes and specific harmonies, this music, designed for congregations not familiar with traditional forms of written music, was common in the South in the years before the Civil War and continued to remain popular well into the 20th century. Three Georgia practitioners, the Reverend William Hauser, John Gordon McCurry and Benjamin Franklin White, were particularly important to its development. White, who died in Augusta, Georgia in 1931, was pivotal in the development of the musical genre as it is known today. McCurry had preceded him with a publication of shaped-note hymns called *The Social Harp* in 1855 in Hart County, Georgia. As George Pullen Jackson noted, "If ever a music grew out of its native soil, that music was McCurry's *Social Harp*."<sup>62</sup> Sacred Harp singing formed the basis for later Baptist hymnody and publications such as the Broadman Hymnal used in the local white Baptist churches of the Sumter County region of during Carter's childhood. These regional hymns stressed hard work, forbearance, resignation to the futility of human vanity, and reward in heaven.<sup>63</sup>

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61. Mazlish/Diamond, 130-138; Born, 35, 81; Bearss, Oral History Interviews with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, 11-12 May 1988, 24.

62. Jackson, *White Spirituals*, 80.

63. Jackson, *White Spirituals*, 80; O'Brien, conversation with Reverend Dan Ariail, Maranatha Baptist Church, Plains Georgia, 6 November 1990; *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press, 1975), passim.

The church was also paternalistic in nature; transgression from the community norms was condemned and could involve social ostracism if the transgression was severe enough – as in the case of the visionary Clarence Jordan. A Baptist preacher and scholar, Jordan founded an agricultural commune, Koinonia Farms, in the early 1940s 9 miles from Plains. Jordan wished to bring the Christian message of love and the brotherhood of all men and women to his fellow southwestern Georgians – and racial equality was part of that message. He also translated the Bible from Greek into modern southwestern Georgia dialect, calling the work "The Cotton Patch Gospels." Koinonia Farms, controversial from its beginnings, later became a center of violence in the 1960s, when opponents of racial equality attacked the settlement in an effort to close it. Various black residents of Plains, such as midwife Gussie Jackson, worked with Koinonia. Booker B. Schley, former trustee of Plains' Rosenwald School and Chairman of the Board of Deacons for eight years for Lebanon Baptist Church, noted that "One thing that began to change things sure enough down here was Koinonia Farms . . . They come here and they begin to treat folk like they're human, and that went a long way." Jordan died in 1969, but the farms continued as Koinonia Partners. Jordan was ostracized from the Plains Baptist Church because of what the church membership saw as his radical and communal teachings. When Jimmy Carter and his family, in 1966, opposed a resolution prohibiting attendance of "Negroes and Civil Rights agitators" at Plains Baptist, they also met with anger and hostility. As in most American communities, the church reflected the values of the community and, by association, gave support and legitimacy to those values, just or unjust. But the Baptist philosophies of Clarence Jordan, were just as much a part of the religious background of the region as those of Plains Baptist. Jordan's attitudes pointed to an alternative route of racial peace and justice that Jimmy Carter later took forward on a national and international basis as a legacy of his life in Plains and southwest Georgia.<sup>64</sup>

The fourth element of Carter's boyhood was the school. Generally, the school, as with the church, reflects and reenforces community standards and sensibilities. Certainly, at least on one level, the segregated school system in Plains did just that. Separate, substandard facilities for blacks provided for their needs. However, on another very important level, it reflected more positive

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64. Walters, *History of Plains*, 89-92; Dallas Lee, *The Cotton Patch Evidence: The Story of Clarence Jordan and the Koinonia Farm Experiment (1942-1970)* (Americus, Georgia: Koinonia Partners, Inc., 1971), passim; Bearss, Oral History Interviews with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, 11-12 May 1988, 39-40, 48-49, 133-136, 317-318; Glad, 54-85; Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady From Plains* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984), 55-56; Clarence Jordan was a cousin of Jimmy Carter's aide and campaign manager, Hamilton Jordan.

community standards as well. The 10-room, red brick school building with Classical Revival detail, erected in 1921 at a cost of \$50,000, replaced a frame school building. Its architecture suggested not only stability and adherence to tradition, but a progressive belief in education. Its curriculum was controlled by two local phenomena, Miss Julia Coleman and Mr. Y.T. Sheffield. Miss Julia was a graduate of Bessie Tift College at Forsyth, Georgia while Mr. Sheffield was a graduate of Carson-Newman College in Tennessee. True to the accepted gender and teaching norms of the times, Miss Julia represented the cultural side of education, while Mr. Sheffield marshalled the mathematics and physical education courses. They made an effective team. Miss Julia, however, possibly because of familial ties to the community, was the dominant partner.<sup>65</sup>

In many ways, Miss Julia typified the school teacher of the period. A single woman, devoted to her students, she was the daughter of a minister. Many schools across the nation in the 1930s had their Miss Julias and Mr. Sheffields serving as cultural guides and father figures to their young charges. But Miss Julia was special. The school was largely her creation and its curriculum was experimental, offering a wider selection of courses and opportunities than most rural Georgia schools. This was in keeping with Plains tradition. Magnolia Springs Academy had set the precedent, generations before. The Wise Sanitarium and, later, the University of Georgia's Southwest Georgia Agricultural Branch Station, in Plains, also reflected the community commitment to progress. The extended Carter family was associated with all of these developments.

Miss Julia, who later became Superintendent of Schools, saw to it that her students were exposed to a variety of cultural subjects. Literature, composition, art, music (including the obligatory performance on certain instruments), plays, lectures – all served to open a window to the outside world that was fresh and exciting. Y.T. Sheffield saw to it that athletics, particularly basketball,

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65. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 7, 17-23, 54-102; Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 43-46; Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 93-95; Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady*, 54; Walters, *History of Plains*, 93, 95-96; Barthold, *Plains High School*, HABS No. GA-2206, 3. According to Beth Walters, in 1915, a school for black students, The Plains Institutional School, was built with Mrs Rosa Lee Pullum as Principal, Mrs. Lenny Rogers as teacher and Mrs. Lilla Johnson as assistant teacher. In 1921, the abandoned wooden school building was moved to Archery, and reestablished as the Johnson Home Industrial College, with Bishop W.D. Johnson of the A.M.E. (African Methodist Episcopal) Church as Headmaster. (See Walter, *History of Plains* 93, 95-96.)

Just as they reflected the accepted values of the 1930s in Sumter County, white schools reflected the tensions of the 1960s 30 years later. Rosalynn Carter remembers that when President Kennedy was shot in 1963 that the teacher in Chip Carter's classroom said "Good!" and that the students applauded. Chip Carter threw a chair at the teacher and spent several days in the principal's office. (Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady*, 54.)

shop, math, science and related activities played important, balanced roles in the curriculum as well. Miss Julia's and Mr. Sheffield's agendas impressed the minds of their students. Miss Julia's connection to the community was particularly exemplified in her gardens on the west side of the school known as the "friendship garden." A section of the gardens was named as "baby row". Each time a former student married and had a baby, the family donated a shrub or bush to be planted in this memorial garden. Thus, the members of the community, trained by Miss Julia's school, had a lasting and visual existence and legitimacy in the town's cultural landscape in a very literal sense.<sup>66</sup>

In 1937, Plains High School was designated by the State Board of Education as a model or laboratory school, to be used as an example for other Georgia school programs, due largely to the efforts of Miss Julia Coleman. Jimmy Carter graduated from Plains High School in 1941 at the top of his class and as Salutatorian; his position as Valedictorian had been forfeited when he was caught playing hookey against the instructions of Mr. Sheffield.<sup>67</sup>

Jimmy Carter was deeply impressed by Miss Julia, this ungainly lady with the large nose and pulled back hair, who had been crippled by polio. To him, her face took on a beauty all its own when she read her favorite poems to her classes. She took a personal interest in her students, particularly in those individuals that evidenced promise or unique possibilities. President Carter remembers being given Tolstoy's *War and Peace* to read at age 12 by Miss Julia. Intellectual pursuits were also encouraged at home by his mother. He received a complete set of the works of French author Guy De Maupassant from a relative at an early age. Jimmy Carter listed in his 8th grade notebook 6 good mental habits: 1) Expect to accomplish what you attempt; 2) Like other people and have them like you; 3) Decide quickly what you would like to do and do it; 4) stick to whatever you do; 5) welcome fearfully [fearlessly] all wholesome ideas and experiences; 6) Avoid daydreams, give up anger, worry, hatred and envy; do not be afraid of anything that is honest or purposeful.

Miss Julia was invited to the White House during the Roosevelt Administration in recognition for her progressive teaching. The trip was not lost on Jimmy and his school friends; they built a

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66. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains Georgia, 11 May 1988, 7, 17-23, 54-102; Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 43-46; Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 93-95, Walters, *History of Plains*, 93.

67. Barthold, *Plains High School*, HABS No. GA-2206, 4-5.

replica of the White House as a class project. As historians have noted, Miss Julia pointed the way away from home – toward new worlds and ideas, much as his Uncle Tom Gordy had inspired him with stories of his days in the Navy. President Carter considered the years with Miss Julia among the most valuable in his life and he quoted from her in his inaugural address to the citizens of the United States.<sup>68</sup>

Miss Julia did not leave a record of how she felt about school segregation or racial matters; Her colleague, Y.T. Sheffield, supported racial segregation, including education, as did most of the white community in Plains. Given her educational background and progressive inclinations, she probably gave it a lot of thought. She once said,

I am well aware of the host of evils, negations, confusions and conflict. But I see much good shining through the mists. I deplore all the evil, but I firmly believe in the triumph of the Greater Good.<sup>69</sup>

Miss Julia was an educator, not a politician. Nevertheless, she established important attitudes regarding community in students such as Jimmy Carter, that, combined with the attitudes of his own family, served to form a strong and positive base for his own questions and actions years later, when he would become the symbol of the New South.

As a young boy, Jimmy Carter saw Plains and Sumter County as the world – a center of culture and economics. In villages such as Plains, technology also offered contact with other worlds in the form of the "Butthead", an inter-urban train line. The one-cylinder power plant that punctuated the sights and sounds of his school days with its rhythmic firing and attendant smoke rings represented "uptown" living that included electricity and modern convenience. Carter's family was heavily involved in the operation of the town, its politics and its community. His father's brother, Alton, had business and political interests there, including a mule barn. Alton Carter served as mayor of Plains for 28 years during his lifetime and also served as a city councilman and county commissioner. Earl Carter also had business interests in town and was active in politics, serving on the school board and as one of the first area directors of the federal Rural Electrification Administration (REA) in 1937. Other families such as the Wises, the Hudsons, the Olivers, the McDonalds, the Bradleys, and the Williamses had business interests in the town, mostly centered

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68. Walters, *History of Plains*, 94; Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 43; Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 93-95.

69. Carter, *Cousin Beedie, Cousin Hot*, 56.

around agriculture or professional pursuits. The McDonalds and the Bradleys were among the wealthiest, but no one group controlled the town of Plains. It operated as a limited southern democracy in which, as one author has pointed out, "any middle-class white male . . . could find a role to play in town and county politics if he was so inclined."<sup>70</sup>

Blacks, on the other hand, found themselves trapped in a nightmare of Jim Crow legislation, poll taxes that kept them from voting, terrorism and intimidation. The problem was not just a Southern one; studies record that between 1882 and 1951, 4,730 people were victims of lynch mobs in the United States; of these, 3,347 were Black. Between 1882 and 1930, 508 lynchings occurred in Georgia, an average of 10.3 a year. Nineteen took place between 1931 and 1945. In addition to racial terrorism, the change from cotton to peanut farming after World War II left many blacks in southwest Georgia and elsewhere unemployed. Their plight was largely ignored and accepted by the white community as the necessary nature of things, save for an occasional individual anonymous charitable act. Their place in the community continued to be one without voice and little hope.<sup>71</sup>

In Plains, the two societies, black and white, continued their parallel existence into the 20th century. At the turn of the century, merchants such as Peter Floyd and Oscar Thommie, Sr. operated businesses in the black business section one block south of the depot. According to local tradition, Mr. Floyd was the first black man to build his own home in Plains. Joe Kater hired out as a skilled carpenter and operated a barber shop while Mr. Tom King owned and operated a cotton gin. Putt Tondee ran a shoe shop, Alex Tatum operated a barber shop, and Thad Chappel owned a snack shop. Over the years, other black citizens operated businesses: Henry Jackson, J. Schley, Charles Hicks, Johnny Graham. Plains also had its own black educators, such as Mrs. Lillian Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Reed, Miss Essie M. Ross, Mrs. Almeta Tatum, the Reverend W.D. Johnson and Mrs. Annie B. Jackson Floyd. But the businesses and schools of the black community remained separate and culturally estranged from the dominant white society. Daily interaction, however, in the form of labor as field hands, cooks, nurses, midwives continued the

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70. Glad, *Jimmy Carter* 37-42; Walters, *History of Plains*, 54-70; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 130; Bearss, Oral History Interview with Hugh Carter, Plains, Georgia, 18 December 1985, 35.

71. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1973), 477; Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 37-42; Walters, *History of Plains*, 54-70.

well-known ambivalence between black and white that was the source of much affection, but also tension and hard feelings, between both groups.<sup>72</sup>

Other white families, such as the Edgar Smiths, also lived in Plains. Mr. Smith operated a machine shop and later drove a school bus. Active in politics, he served on the city council. Althea Smith, his wife, worked as a housewife until his death when she was forced to seek employment outside the home. Her daughter, Rosalynn Smith was a friend of Ruth Carter and some years younger than Jimmy. Rosalynn also benefitted from Miss Julia's curriculum and the experimental school. She would grow to young womanhood during the years that James Earl Carter, Jr. was going to college, to Annapolis and beginning his career with the U.S. Navy. Thus, both Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter grew up in an environment where the political family played an important part in the community. Their lives were the logical outgrowth and end product of Plains' religious and educational families. Raised as leaders by families of leaders, they too were expected to excel and lead in the community.<sup>73</sup>

#### THE WORLD OUTSIDE OF PLAINS (1941-1953)

Carter's years in college and in the Navy propelled him from Plains into an expanded world. But he took with him a firm and positive foundation of generations-old community and cultural background. For Jimmy Carter, the great great grandson of Georgian Wiley Carter, it began on the farm, was disciplined in the family, honed in the church, and refined in the school. Later it would be brought to fruition in politics. Carter's need to excel, to succeed – to lead – found ample expression in both college and the service. Carter completed two years of undergraduate work, one at Georgia Southwestern in Americus and one at Georgia Tech in Atlanta before his appointment to Annapolis was guaranteed both by his hard work and with the necessary political clout provided by his family. Upon completion of his education and receiving his commission, he returned home to marry Miss Rosalynn Smith, his sister's best friend, on July 7, 1946. Again,

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72. *History of Plains*, (Americus: Gammage Print Shop, 1976), 31, 54, 57.

73. Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 37-42; Walters, *History of Plains*, 54-70.

family took on a further extended community meaning. "Once we got married we were kin to everybody in town", recalled Mrs. Carter.<sup>74</sup>

Navy life gave Rosalynn Carter the freedom that she had always craved. Apprehensive at first about leaving her hometown, she soon enjoyed her newly found freedom away from the extended family community of Plains. With her husband stationed in the Pacific, her home in Hawaii became a paradise where she relished her ability to define and to run her own life.

Jimmy Carter's need for a mentor and guide in the service manifested itself in the person of Admiral Hyman Rickover. Controversial, independent, an individual with his own ideas and the strength, will, and determination to see them prevail, Rickover became a father figure for Carter, one that he admired, stood in awe of, and, at times, resented. Carter's natural drive to always "do his best" – reenforced by the family, church and the school institutions of his youth – imbued him with a perfectionist tendency that was sometimes difficult to live up to. Rickover once asked Carter if he had always done his best in school. Candidly, Carter replied that he had not always tried to do his best. "Why Not?", Rickover asked brusquely. Rickover's abrupt question haunted Carter for many years. It provided the title for his pre-presidential book, *Why Not The Best?* Rickover continued to be a respected figure in Carter's life, even during his presidency. Carter's experience in the Navy, first as a traditional naval officer and later as a member of the new elite nuclear submarine officer corps, capitalized on his leadership and wish to excel.

The death of Earl Carter in 1953 brought Jimmy and Rosalynn back to Plains. Rosalynn did not want to return, afraid that her new found freedom would be circumscribed by the town and their families. But they did return, and quickly tried to reassume their place in Plains society.<sup>75</sup>

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74. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 12 May 1988, 339-340, 345; Hugh Carter, *Cousin Beedie*, 60.

75. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May, 1988, 16-17; Glad, 58-68, 70-85; Jimmy Carter, *Why Not The Best?* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1977), 10.

## THE END OF THE OLD ORDER AND THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW: RETURN TO PLAINS (1953-1962)

Jimmy Carter had been gone from Plains for twelve years. Rosalynn had been gone for seven. Education and experience had changed them. Jimmy Carter emerged from his years in college and the Navy as both a southern intellectual in the making and as something of a Jeffersonian technocrat. His interests were now broader and more sophisticated. He continued to read and learn and was most interested in technology as it applied to agriculture. He was also interested in business and in following in his father's and family's footsteps. Rosalynn had been part of a new and exciting world outside of Plains and had become used to a role other than that of the traditional housewife. As her husband's partner, she looked for ways to continue to expand her experience outside the home. She capitalized on the tradition of her hometown, one in which many women worked as partners with their husbands, on the farms and in their businesses. Initially, she found ways to accommodate her needs by working at the Carter peanut warehouse as book keeper and office manager. As time went on, she became a full partner with Jimmy. "Rosalynn has probably worked as much as a partner as any woman I know.", he stated "She soon became an equal partner with me . . . she helped me . . . she was a full partner in making . . . decision[s]." "It developed over time", recalled Mrs. Carter.<sup>76</sup> In addition, the Carters now also had their own family. A son, John William (Jack) had been born in Portsmouth, Virginia on July 3, 1947. Another son, James Earl Carter III (Chip) was born in Honolulu April 12, 1950. A third boy, Donnel Jeffrey (Jeff) was born August 18, 1952 in New London, Connecticut. The lives of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter had changed.<sup>77</sup>

In their absence, Plains and the nation had changed as well. Various occurrences marked that change. In 1942, Baptist minister Clarence Jordan opened the interracial, controversial Koinonia Farms 9 miles outside of Plains. Three years later, the end of World War II left the United States in the position of the most powerful nation on earth. Franklin Roosevelt died at Warm Springs, Georgia, just some 70-odd miles north of Plains, and Harry S. Truman had become President. Truman integrated the Armed Forces in 1948; his attempt to eliminate the poll tax, stop lynching and investigate job discrimination had caused some southern Democrats to form the State's Rights

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76. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 156-157.

77. O'Brien, National Park Service, Telephone conversation with Martin Elzy, Assistant Director, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Atlanta, Georgia 3 January 1991.

Party (Dixiecrats) in 1948 and to nominate Strom Thurmond of South Carolina for President. Truman signed an Executive Order, authorizing the investigation of government workers as to "loyalty" and had also authorized the formation of the Central Intelligence Agency. By 1952, McCarthyism had reached a fever pitch. The U.S. Army, in addition to creating and deploying the atom bomb, succeeded in bouncing a radar signal off the surface of the moon and returning it to earth in 2.4 seconds. Post-war America had entered the nuclear age; the fictional Buck Rogers technology of the Carters' youth was becoming an everyday occurrence. The Cold War was on and the future seemed unsure, as bleak and terrifying as it was exciting and promising. The political, technological, economic and social world of the nation, and particularly the South, was on the brink of unprecedented change.<sup>78</sup>

The Carters returned to their home town in 1953, the year that Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed for treason. Also in that year, President Truman appointed Earl Warren to the Supreme Court. Charlie Yeager flew the X-1A aircraft at 1,650 mph at 90,000 feet. It was in 1953 that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that restaurants in Washington, D.C., could no longer refuse to serve Blacks. It was one year before the Court's momentous *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, Kansas decision ended the legalized "separate but equal" Jim Crow laws of the 1896 *Plessey v. Ferguson* ruling. The State of Georgia, in the traditions of southern politics since the time of Andrew Jackson, declared the Supreme Court ruling "null and void." In 1952, Mr. Earl Carter was elected to the State legislature. He died the next year.<sup>79</sup>

The death of Mr. Earl and the return of his oldest son to Plains symbolized, in many ways, the death and rebirth of the South that was to take place in the years ahead. The old ways were gone, changing at a rapid rate, and although the Klan would enjoy a brief resurgence, aided by organizations such as the White Citizens' Council, those protests, while violent, were comparatively brief. In less than 20 years a 400-year legacy of racial oppression and inequality in the American South would be substantially altered. Jimmy Carter would play an important role in this change.

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78. Lee, *Cotton Patch*, 31; Linton, *The Bicentennial Almanac*, 361-377.

79. Linton, *Bicentennial Almanac*, 377, 381; Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 80.

Upon returning home, Jimmy began operating the family peanut business. Rosalynn helped in the office, answering the telephone, managing the accounting and helping with decisions. Carter capitalized on earlier innovations in the region's peanut industry, and, as time progressed, designed shelling equipment for the plant and made other improvements to the operation. Like his father, Carter took a position on the local school board. Jimmy, Rosalynn and the boys came home in the middle of a drought year. Mr. Earl had made about \$90,000 in loans and the monies were difficult to collect. Indeed, Mr. Earl had decided to make arrangements to cancel the accounts of some of his debtors entirely at the time of his death because he knew that they would not be able to pay. This not only showed consideration for those in dire straits; it also spared his heirs from having to pursue matters to outcomes that Mr. Earl knew would be futile.

The Carter family moved into a public housing duplex on Paschal Street. A year later they moved to a house on Montgomery Street. In 1956, they moved to the Stewart place owned by Dr. Thad Wise, on the road between Archery and Plains, in the vicinity of Lebanon Cemetery. During this period Jimmy became active, as his father had been, in a variety of community organizations such as the Lions, the Plains Parent-Teacher Association and the Plains Baptist Church. Together with other townspeople, Jimmy organized a political rally for gubernatorial candidates. Later, in 1961, Jimmy and Rosalynn engaged architect Hugh Gaston to design a modest ranch style house on Woodland Avenue. It would be the only home they would ever own.<sup>80</sup>

Initially, Carter, as a seventh generation Georgian, accepted Plains and its attitudes. After his experience in the Navy, he and his father had disagreed on political and racial matters, but even after his father's death, he was reluctant to put his true feelings into practice. It is possible that he was not altogether certain what those feelings were. His childhood had led him to believe that segregation and the unequal treatment of blacks was the accepted way of the world. His family (particularly his mother) and schooling taught him to question these assumptions. Later, his military experiences in the world community outside of Plains reenforced his questions regarding the attitudes and conventions of his homeland. Those attitudes had changed and as time progressed, they steadily continued to change. The national political climate of 1950s and 1960s

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80. Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 69-70; Barthold, *Jimmy Carter House*, HABS No. GA-244, 1; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 162-166; Collins, *The Search for Jimmy Carter*, 36.

allowed Jimmy Carter to confirm and to act on his convictions in a way that had not been possible for his parents. He later said

"The success of the Civil Rights movement and the laws that were passed, the supreme Court ruling – these changes made in the '50s and '60s transformed the South for the better. It liberated not only black people but white people as well. Racial segregation was like a millstone around our neck. It held us down and it created schisms among our citizens that were mutually damaging. The liberation that came to us in Plains and other communities was the end of legalized segregation. [It] was very beneficial to me, politically and otherwise. I could have never been elected President from the deep South had it not been for Martin Luther King, Jr., Lyndon Johnson, the Congress action [sic] on voting rights, and the progress that we made in the South."<sup>81</sup>

Carter took a position on the Plains School Board in 1956, initially serving out a term for one of Rosalynn's cousins who had died in a hunting accident. Here he confronted the problem of race and community. It was not easy. Later, some would accuse him of "dragging his feet" in the manner of countless other southern leaders of the 1950s and '60s; others believed he acted moderately, and, at times, with courage.

Carter's first venture into politics occurred in 1961 when he supported a referendum to consolidate the school system. The black high school would be left as it was, with white schools consolidating. His cousin Hugh Carter labeled him an integrationist; Hugh and his former coach, Y.T. Sheffield led a rally to defeat the measure. It failed by 84 votes county-wide. In Plains it failed 33 to 201. "It was a stinging disappointment," recalled Carter. Nevertheless, he served as chairman of the Board of Education until elected to the State Senate in 1962.<sup>82</sup>

Over the next ten years Carter ran the family business, served on the school board, the Sumter County Hospital Board and the Carnegie Library Board. Other organizations, such as the White Citizen's Council and the Ku Klux Klan, he refused to join. Such refusals were potentially dangerous both to economic and social status. But Jimmy Carter remained true to the precepts he

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81. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 44; O'Brien, Telephone Conversation with Madeline Edwards, Secretary to President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, October 4, 1990.

82. Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 78-79; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 38, 46.

had learned at home, in church and in Miss Julia's classroom. He stood firmly by those principles regardless of political or peer pressures.

### ENTRY INTO POLITICS (1962-1966)

Approached by friends from Americus, Jimmy Carter ran for state senator in October 1962. His entry into the twilight of old-style Southern politics was a shock. Carter based his campaign for the Democratic nomination on good government and his military and civic record, prudently avoiding the volatile question of race. His opponent, Homer Moore, a friendly business competitor from Richland, however, had supporters like Joe Hurst from neighboring Quitman County who thought nothing of stuffing ballot boxes – and backing his actions with physical violence if necessary.

Upon receiving information that the election had been rigged, Carter called the newspaper in Columbus, only to find out that the investigating reporter and Hurst were old friends. Carter would not give up. He asked for a recount in Quitman County and contested the election. His life was threatened and he was followed by thugs attempting to intimidate him. The Georgia Democratic Committee was not interested in Carter's case – as far as they were concerned, Moore had been elected.

Carter then appealed to John Pennington, a reporter for the *Atlanta Journal*. According to Dr. Henry King Stanford of Americus, Pennington, a native of Andersonville, found that many voters in Georgetown were evidently very well organized – more than 100 had voted alphabetically in the election! Obviously, they had been "voted" by the corrupt political machine. Through attorney Griffin Bell in Americus, he obtained the services of lawyer Charles Kirbo of Atlanta to represent him in his case. The election was finally declared to be fraudulent and it was determined that Carter had won. But he still had to be accepted by the Georgia Democratic Committee. Finally, the Committee agreed, but not in time to place Carter's name on the ballot in place of Moore's. Carter volunteers worked with stamps and markers to correct the mistake. Then the opposition appealed the election fraud ruling; a move was made to strike all names from the ballot and to rely on a write-in election.

When voting day dawned, people were not quite sure who the candidates were. Carter won – but the legality of the victory was clouded by a judge's pre-election injunction to remove his name from the ballot – some counties did not. Finally, the courts ruled that any other action in the matter would have to come from the principles. Moore conceded. Carter won. He was state senator from the 14th district of Georgia.<sup>83</sup>

Carter's record as a state senator was impressive. Education, mental health and highway department reform were high on his list of priorities. Rosalynn's efficient handling of the peanut business in Plains enabled him to devote the time needed for effective politicking. Carter's senatorial career in Georgia came less than a year before the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act which guaranteed federal participation in civil rights matters in the South. Civil rights work caused havoc in the South and in the Sumter County region in the 1960s, but it proved to be the making of the political life of Jimmy Carter. His first speech in the senate supported the abolition of the "thirty questions" required of black voters, with Carter stating that it was only a ruse to keep blacks from voting. The rule remained on the books, however. Carter ran unopposed in 1964 after being instrumental in having Georgia Southwestern College promoted to a senior college. In 1966, he ran for governor of Georgia, declining a congressional race for which he was considered a shoo-in. He lost the Democratic nomination and Lester Maddox became governor of Georgia.<sup>84</sup>

## **CARTER, PLAINS AND GEORGIA: YEARS OF CHANGE AND GROWTH – THE RISE OF THE NEW SOUTH (1966-1974)**

Nineteen sixty-six proved to be a watershed year for Jimmy Carter. He and his family argued with members of the Plains Baptist Church over a resolution banning blacks and civil rights workers

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83. Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 93; Bearss, Interview with Hugh Carter, Plains, Georgia, 17 December 1985, 26-29; Harold P. Henderson and Gary L. Roberts, *Georgia Governors in an Age of Change: From Ellis Arnall to George Busbee* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 261-285; Dr. Henry King Stanford to Superintendent Fred Boyles, 5 August 1991, 1-2. As a result, Joe Hurst's operation in Quitman County became a target for investigation by the FBI. Both Kirbo and Bell later served as important members of the Carter presidential campaign and administration; Griffin Bell later served as United States Attorney General. George Busbee, one of Homer Moore's young attorneys, became governor of Georgia in 1975.

84. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 44; Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 93-99.

from religious services. Blacks had been traditionally allowed to attend special services such as weddings or funerals at white churches and the Carters did not agree that this should change. In the absence of the pastor, Y.T. Sheffield, Jimmy's former coach, chaired the meeting. The vote ended with 6 against the resolution, 50 in favor and about 200 abstaining. Later, many called to support the Carters after the fact; others would not even approach their car to fill the gas tank at the local service station. "The worst was church, I think," recalled Mrs. Carter. "When you'd go and everybody would kind of look at you and kind of tuck their head because they didn't want to talk to you. That was hard."<sup>85</sup> It was a troubled time in Plains. "Rosalynn and I and my mother were the main ones around Plains and the white community who were distressed about these things enough to try and do something about it, openly,"<sup>86</sup> noted Carter. In the midst of the civil rights controversy, Y.T. Sheffield, former principal and opponent of school consolidation and integration, retired in 1965.

In 1965, Miss Lillian Carter joined the Peace Corps in India where she was able to satisfy a life long ambition of wanting to work with the poor and underprivileged. She returned in 1968 to Plains and to a surprise. In her absence, her children had built her a new country house on property purchased by Earl Carter in 1937. The house built on the site by Mr. Earl served not only as a Carter get away place, but also was used by the high school for their Junior and Senior proms. The original house on the property had burned in the early 1960s. The site later figured in other Carter political gatherings and served as Miss Lillian's residence in the 1970s.<sup>87</sup>

The times and politics took its toll on Jimmy Carter. After his loss of the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 1966, he entered a period of classic depression, emerging from it with the aid of his family, particularly his sister, evangelist Ruth Carter Stapleton. Four years later, he redoubled his effort, running for governor of Georgia again in 1970. This time he was successful. But his success was marred by the fact that Lester Maddox won the lieutenant-governor's post. Maddox

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85. Hugh Carter, *Cousin Beedie*, 312; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 49.

86. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 39.

87. Barthold, *Pond House*, HABS No. GA-2204, 1-2.

dogged Carter's steps in an attempt to thwart the Governor Carter's programs over the next four years, but his efforts met with little success.<sup>88</sup>

During Carter's 1970 gubernatorial race, Rosalynn Carter, her husband's partner in politics as well as marriage and business, also hit the campaign trail. Making speeches initially terrified her, but that did not stop her fulfilling her role as her husband's partner. On one occasion she had her son, Jeffrey, drive through one town to the city limits where she became sick. She then got back in the car, turned around, and went back to make her speech. No price was too great to pay, no speech too tough, no appearance too unsettling for Rosalynn Carter to avoid. Her husband – her partner – had made the commitment – and so had she.<sup>89</sup>

Carter's campaign for governor of Georgia in 1970 reflected that of a complex man in the midst of change, politically and philosophically. Compared to his opponent, Carl Sanders, described by one author as a "country club version of the good ole boy" and nicknamed "Cufflink Carl" by Carter supporters, Carter appeared as the more conservative candidate. At his inauguration, he shocked both white and black southerners by noting that the time of the Old South and its ways were past. "I say to you quite frankly that the time for racial discrimination is over," stated Governor Carter in his inaugural address. Some Old South supporters felt deceived when Carter unveiled his plans for Georgia – plans they felt bore an all too liberal bent. But, having fought a masterful political campaign, Carter continued to push for honesty and efficiency in government. Personally, he practiced the compassion and generosity and justice that he preached. He saw to it that pictures of prominent blacks were hung in the state capitol in Atlanta, including the portrait of Dr. Martin Luther King, even though the Ku Klux Klan paraded outside the capitol. He helped

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88. Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 153, 176-196; Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 108-199, 123-140; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 39-41, 47-54; Henderson and Roberts, *Georgia Governors*, 236-238; Hugh Carter, *Cousin Beedie*, 55; Billy and Sybil Carter, *Billy: Billy Carter's Reflections On His Struggle With Fame, Alcoholism And Cancer*. (Newport, Rhode Island: Edgehill Publications, [1989]), 70-71. As in many other parts of the nation, politics is often not only the lifeblood of the community – it can also qualify as blood sport as well. Cousin Hugh Carter took Jimmy's seat in the state senate when he decided to run for governor, an act that Lillian Carter highly resented due to Hugh's initial opposition to Jimmy's political career. Later, as a joke she and son Billy, together with other Plains locals such as Randy Coleman and "Hogpen" Johnson, put up money to run Malcolm "Chicken" Wishard against Hugh Carter for his senate seat. "Chicken" Wishard was a member of Billy Carter's gas station gang. Wishard lost, but Lillian Carter said that the \$500.00 she invested in his campaign was some of the best money she ever spent. Hugh Carter never ran for the office again. Lillian and Hugh made peace before Lillian's death in 1983. As for Billy, he said it was just as well that "Chicken" had lost – "he probably would have just turned out to be another typical Georgia politician." (Billy and Sybil Carter, *Billy*, 70-71)

89. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 159.

assure that blacks were able to participate in state government. He made a black prison trustee, Mary Prince, a member of his house staff at the governor's mansion. Mary Prince continued to work for the Carter family throughout Carter's political career.<sup>90</sup>

With the governorship of Jimmy Carter, Plains began a third era of change in the 20th century, change that had commenced with the introduction of rural electrification in the late 1930s and the ascendancy of peanut cultivation in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The civil rights movement, centering in Atlanta, changed lives in the South and in Sumter County forever. The work of Martin Luther King, Jr., Jimmy Carter and their contemporaries created a new day and new ways. The number of black tenants and sharecroppers, dwindling ever since World War II, continued to drop as blacks moved to cities in search of better lives and opportunities. New crops, such as soybeans, began to augment the agricultural base of Sumter County. Tree farming became important. Peaches and pecans, always available, also increased in demand. Truck farming began to replace the old tenancy and sharecropping system. Migrant workers now showed up in June and left in the fall, taking the place on the rural landscape of the former black sharecroppers, but without the complication of residency or extended community conflicts. As the hometown of the governor of Georgia, a man who in 1971 *Time* magazine called the symbol of the "New South", Plains found itself increasingly pulled into the limelight. As governor, Carter continued his agenda regarding education, mental health, transportation, government reorganization, zero-based budgeting, affirmative action, environmental issues and related matters. He honed old political connections and made many new ones. Plains benefitted from Carter's New South. Community opportunities formerly closed by tradition and prejudice now opened. Henry Eugene Jackson became Plains' first black city councilman in 1972.<sup>91</sup>

Another, more personal, event took place in the Jimmy Carter family in these tumultuous years. A daughter, Amy Lynn, was born to Jimmy and Rosalynn on October 19, 1967 in Plains. Amy was the first of Jimmy and Rosalynn's children to be born in Plains. Her life would be that of a public

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90. Hugh Carter, *Cousin Beedie*, 126-128, 144; *Time Magazine* 1971; Tom Collins, *The Search for Jimmy Carter* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1976), 76, 78, 80, 84; Jimmy Carter, Inaugural Address, January 12, 1971, in Frank Daniel (comp.), *Addresses of Jimmy Carter 1971-1975* (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Archives and History, 1975), 79.

91. Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 141-205; Mazlish/Diamond, *Jimmy Carter*, 193-209; Range, 182-196; O'Brien, Conversation with Ms. Grace Jackson, Plains, Georgia, April 18, 1990; Bearss, Oral History with Pete Godwin, Plains, Georgia, 20 December 1990, 26-31; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 44-48.

figure – a governor's daughter at the age of three – and the youngest child of the 39th President of the United States at the age of 9.<sup>92</sup>

## **PRESIDENTIAL VICTORY, PRESIDENTIAL DEFEAT (1974-1980)**

In 1974, Jimmy Carter, after careful planning and consideration, announced his candidacy for President of the United States. The decision was not made lightly. The pursuit of the Democratic nomination was a hard-fought battle, as was the subsequent presidential race. As in business, Rosalynn Carter acted as her husband's partner, discussing his decision to run, offering advice, planning strategy, even making the speeches that she hated to make.<sup>93</sup>

Carter's campaign pulled the Plains community into national focus. It was the hometown of a relatively unknown man who presumed to the presidency of the nation. Plains became a platform from which Carter presented his presidential message to the people. The town resisted the urge to become a caricature of itself, although many, both native and interloper, jumped at the chance to capitalize on the happenings. Restaurants, gift shops, and all of the paraphernalia of notoriety began to make their impact. Carter's brother Billy operated his later legendary gas station, dispensing both fuel and earthy, down-home humor. Plains citizen Jerry Roberts re-painted the sign in downtown Plains on the second story of the business block that had been erected during Carter's race for governor, to indicate Jimmy's impending presidential race. (Later the sign would be re-painted once again, reflecting Carter's election victory as president). Cousin Hugh Carter, successor to Jimmy's regional political sphere, added souvenirs to his antiques and worm farm businesses. A special \$5,000 a plate fund raising dinners with celebrities was held at the Pond House as were intimate strategy planning sessions. The Plains Depot rejuvenated by members of Carter's "Peanut Brigade", was cleaned up, re-painted in white and "Carter Green" and used as

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92. O'Brien to Elzy, 3 January 1991.

93. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 158-160.

a backdrop for most of Carter's significant campaign announcements.<sup>94</sup> "I think every nation on earth sent somebody through that depot," recalled Plains resident Ida English:

"I told 'em, one day I said, 'Well, I think every nation on earth has been here except the Russians,' and about that time a man came running and wanted to know if I'd seen his Russian photographer. I said, 'Well, the Russians have got here now.'" <sup>95</sup>

As the campaign increased momentum, a portable building and a house trailer were moved to a site across the street from the depot for use as a business office and mail room to handle the thousands of letters and calls received daily. Plains residents, black and white together, worked for their candidate's dream, and as they worked, their candidate's dream became their own. The town became a regional curiosity. Nationally, people asked themselves "Jimmy Who?," as the peanut farming governor of Georgia made his bid for the presidency of the United States.<sup>96</sup>

Carter's election in the Bi-Centennial year of 1976 as President of the United States completed the process in Plains that had begun with his election as governor in 1970. The town would never be the same again. Carter returned to his native state of Georgia in early February of 1977 aboard a 117.4-million-dollar military jumbo jet for his first visit home since his inauguration. Even before his inauguration, tourists began arriving in earnest. According to various reports, the community of 650 found itself deluged by as many as 3,000 to 10,000 tourists a day. Technology once again affected the town as media set up a collection of house trailers in what became known locally as "TV City" at the base of the city water tower. Broadcasts from this point informed the nation and the world as the happenings of the Carter campaign. Security measures for the new president tightened. The Carter home on Woodland Drive was blocked from the highway by a wooden gate and guard house, and the Gnann House next door was appropriated by the Secret Service in 1977

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94. Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 225, 229-280; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May, 1988, 102-106, 108-109; Small, Oral History Interview with John and Betty Pope, Americus, Georgia, 28 June, 1989, 18-19; Harold Issac, *Jimmy Carter's Peanut Brigade* (Dallas, Texas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1977), passim; Hugh Carter, *Cousin Beedie*, 102-103, 284-285; Billy and Sybil Carter, Billy, 93-102; Barthold, *Pond House*, HABS No. GA-2204, 2. There is much local discussion as to how the "Carter Green" color came to be used in Carter's campaign. It may have been taken from traditional heraldry – Kelly green is the dominant color on the English Carter coat of arms.

95. Ed Bearss, NPS, Interview with Ida English, December 21, 1985, 22-23.

96. Barthold, *Plains Depot*, HABS No. GA-2209, 3-4, Wise Sanitarium, HABS No. GA-2209, 3, Ross Dean Funeral Home, HABS No. GA-2215, 2; Walters, *History of Plains*, 137-138; Bearss, Oral History Interview with Ida English, December 21, 1985, 23-25.

as security headquarters. An iron fence, formerly located at President Nixon's Key Biscayne estate in Florida was installed in 1982.

Plains became a national platform on which various groups paraded in an attempt to draw attention to themselves and their causes. Even before Carter's inauguration, Phillip Berrigan and 6 people protesting the nuclear policy of the United States were arrested on January 8, 1977 by Plains authorities 100 yards Carter home. According to the police, they lacked a permit for the banner they were carrying that read "Nuclear weapons massacre the innocent." They were whisked away by local authorities and taken to Americus for a "Mayor's Court" to avoid publicity. The year proved to be a controversial one for Plains. Farmers drove in tractor caravans to protest federal farm policies in 1977, the first of a number of tractorcades to the town. That same year the Ku Klux Klan attempted to use the streets of Plains as a public platform. Also in 1977, *Hustler* publisher Larry Flynt, converted to born-again status by the president's sister, evangelist Ruth Carter Stapleton, bought the town newspaper, *The Plains Monitor*. Miss Lillian moved out of town to the Pond House after harassment by tourists made life in town untenable. Her dog's collar was stolen by visitors as a souvenir.

All was not carnival and commotion, however. The Georgia Department of Tourism opened a visitor's center outside the town in 1977, dispensing information and hospitality. Public rest-room facilities were built and a baseball field was established on which Carter, his staff, and members of the press played much-publicized softball games. The police force grew in the next few years from one night watchman in 1975 to a fully equipped force of six. As Carter the individual had become the symbol and leader of the American people, so had his home town become a symbol and gathering place for the nation's people, good and bad, rich and poor, all races, all creeds. As he attempted to mold the destiny of the nation, so did the nation affect and change his life and his hometown.<sup>97</sup>

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97. *New York Times*, 9 January 1977, section 1, 18. Frances Lewine, "President Carter Returns to Plains", *Americus Times-Recorder* 11 February 1977, 1; Hugh Carter, *Cousin Beedie and Cousin Hot*, 23, 271-272; Barthold, *Ross Dean Funeral Home*, HABS No. GA-2215, 3; *Wise Sanitarium No. 1*, HABS No. GA-2216, 2; *Pond House*, HABS no. Ga-2204, 1-3; Billy Carter, 112-113; Jim Small, Oral History Interview with P.J. Wise, Plains, Georgia, 29 June 1989, 15-19; Walters, 137-138; Bearss, Oral History Interview with Loren Blanton, Plains, Georgia, 21 December 1985, 30-33; Bearss, Oral History Interview with Ida English, Plains, Georgia, 21 December 1985, 27-28; William Patrick O'Brien, conversation with Chief Agent Bill Bush, Secret Service, Plains, Georgia, 6 December 1990. It is somewhat difficult to get an exact idea of the number tourists visiting Plains on a daily basis during this period; various sources note figures as low as 3,000 and as high as 10,000 visitors daily for some time.

For the most part, the people of Plains took all change in stride. Others, like the President's brother Billy, were both amused and outraged at all the hubbub. Billy Carter, not the type of man to allow outsiders to slander his family or to capitalize on things they didn't entirely understand, moved one black family living rent-free on Carter property to better housing on the request of Presidential Press Secretary Jody Powell. Billy then burned the old sharecropper's shacks to the ground. A highly independent thinker and outspoken advocate of issues he felt were right, Billy Carter had supported his brother and the issues surrounding school consolidation. He did not appreciate being portrayed by outsiders as part of a system that he did not support who understood little of complex southern issues. Fed up with the racket of campaign and alarmed at the possible changes for his town, Billy unsuccessfully ran for mayor against A.L. Blanton in 1976. Other Jimmy Carter supporters, like John and Betty Pope, believed that God watched over Carter's administration. Betty Pope stated that, although she feared for Carter's life upon his election, "I didn't ever believe that [assassination] would happen in my life . . . because it was something bigger than all of us. And I say that with great reverence . . . I don't mean anything sacrilegious about it at all because John and I are both Christians and believe very strongly."<sup>98</sup>

#### THE CHRISTIAN PHOENIX AND THE "GLOBAL VILLAGE" – CARTER AND PLAINS (1980-1990)

Carter's presidential administration from 1977 to 1981 covered significant years in American history. The energy crisis, Salt II, the normalization of relations with China, the Panama Canal Treaty, the Alaska Land Bill, the Middle East, human rights, environmental issues, the historic Camp David Accords – all reflect the tremendous energy and concern of Jimmy Carter for his nation and the world. Some saw his presidency in terms of a North/South struggle. Others ignored sectional and cultural conflicts, choosing to interpret the struggles of the Carter presidency in economic and political terms. His administration ended as he spent its last hours successfully negotiating the release and return of American hostages from Iran.<sup>99</sup>

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98. Billy and Sybil Carter, *Billy*, 99; Small, Oral History Interview with John and Betty Pope, Americus, Georgia, 28 June 1989, 49-50; Mark Pinsky, "Double Dealing In Plains, Georgia", *Just Schools: A Special Issue of Southern Exposure* (Institute for Southern Studies, 1979), 100.

99. *Keeping Faith*, ix-xii; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, Plains Georgia, 8 December 1988, 52. Near the conclusion of Carter's administration, Press Secretary Jody Powell presented him with a collection of miniature Civil War soldiers – southern troops in a circle of wagons being attacked by

Many political scientists and historians have speculated as to why Jimmy Carter lost the presidency to Ronald Reagan in 1980. Some cite the hostage crisis. Others note Carter's particular personal style and perceived distance from the nation at large. One home town observation on the subject comes from Plains resident David Wise:

I don't consider Jimmy much of a politician. Jimmy is a perfectionist, that's the worst thing about him for being in politics. . . He never did put on the shows that could have got him some votes . . . He's smart; he knows he's smart and he knows why he's doing it. And he's doing it because he feels like it's the best but he don't make me feel – I mean, he's got to make me feel it's the best. And [that] he don't take the time to do that is the only thing I think is wrong with his politics.<sup>100</sup>

Harry Truman once stated that a politician was a person who got people to do what they did not want to do – and like it. Carter the idealist was reluctant to compromise his beliefs for the sake of political salesmanship. He could get people to do what they did not want to do – but they hated it. Carter's reluctance to politic in Washington circles certainly contributed to his defeat. This reluctance, combined with Washington's general aloofness from his administration, his style of leadership, methods of management and a lack of support from the Democratic party served to set the stage for political catastrophe. These factors, coupled with the inauspicious turn of events during the Iran hostage crisis, all contributed to his defeat for the presidency in 1980.

Carter supporters such as P.J. Wise, however, saw it differently: "His love for the country and the American people will go down in history, even though it cost him the presidency. That's the way it went." Jimmy Carter himself was one of his own severest critics. Dr. Henry King Stanford of Americus notes that Carter stated in a video interview that the American people did not see him as providing needed leadership. Carter also stated: "The unforgivable failure that I had was not getting re-elected. And that's something that the press will never forgive and it's an indictment that I can't dispute."<sup>101</sup>

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Yankees. The collection reads "The way it was from 1977 to 1981." (See Bearss, Oral history Interview with President Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter). Although the beginning of U.S. Chinese rapprochement can be traced to the Nixon administration, formal normalization, i.e., the exchange of diplomatic representatives and establishment of formal relations under congressional approval and presidential signatory authority did not take place until the Carter administration.

100. Bearss, Oral History Interview with David Wise, Plains Georgia, 17 December 1985, 39-41.

101. Harry S. Truman, Remarks to the National Planning Association, Statler Hotel, Washington, D.C., February 1, 1949 as reprinted in *The Public Papers of the Presidents* (Washington, D.C.: GPO 1964), Item 25, pg. 123; Bearss, Oral History Interview with P.J. Wise, Plains Georgia, 29 June 1989, 30; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President

Carter's defeat in 1980 brought the Carter family back to their home and community in Plains. Unlike Harry Truman's triumphal return to his home town of Independence in 1953, the Carter's homecoming at the Plains Depot, in the midst of a driving rain, seemed to symbolize the bitter disappointment felt by the President and his supporters. However, in true Plains style, Carter supporters from his hometown and elsewhere turned the dismal event into "the world's largest covered dish party." Local people brought dishes. A radio station worker from Chicago brought a case of chili while a woman from Alabama brought a cake. "They'd call and say 'I want to come,' recalled Maxine Reese, "We'd say 'Come on; it's open to everybody.'" Thus, the Plains community joined the national community in honoring Jimmy Carter at a time when such solidarity helped assuage the bitter sting of defeat. But despite local attempts to remain supportive, Carter, like Truman, returned home with his national popularity at a low ebb. Jimmy Carter returned to a region that in some ways remained openly hostile to much of what he had come to stand for.<sup>102</sup>

The Carters initially busied themselves with their house on Woodland Drive, irregularly occupied by them since Carter's election as governor. They moved their church membership to the newly established Maranatha Baptist Church, established in 1977 on land donated by Mrs. Y.T. Sheffield, widow of the former school principal. Maranatha Baptist Church was formed in 1977 by moderate members of the Plains Baptist Church who split over differences regarding policies on integration of the congregation during the Carter presidential campaign. Twenty-nine members of the congregation left in May of 1977, setting up the Bottsford Baptist Mission in an abandoned Lutheran church. By 1978, the group had constructed this building which they formally dedicated in January 1979. The congregation split during Carter's presidency and there was much speculation as to which Baptist group Jimmy and Rosalynn would join when they returned to Plains. They ultimately moved their membership to Maranatha Baptist.<sup>103</sup> The Carters continued to actively participate in the congregation's stewardship, mowing the grass, cleaning the interior of the sanctuary and teaching Sunday school to the many peoples of Christian and non-Christian faiths from all over the world that regularly attended services at Maranatha. The President made the collection plates of turned wood; both he and the First Lady regularly asked for their favorite

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Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, Plains Georgia, 12 May 1988, 261; Stanford to Boyles, 5 August 1991, 2.

102. Bearss, Oral History Interview with Hugh Carter, Plains Georgia, 18 December 1985, 39-40; Bearss, Oral History Interview with Maxine Reese, Plains, Georgia, 17 December 1985, 38.

103. Barthold, Maranatha Baptist Church, HABS No. GA-2208, 2.

hymns such as "Shall We Gather at the River," "Pass It On", "More Love to Thee, O Christ," and "Since Jesus Came into My Heart." They continued to make themselves available to the general public at the church after services, patiently posing for photographs.

Jimmy and Rosalynn also wrote books, separately and together. After their return to Plains, Anwar Sadat and his wife Jehan visited the Carters at their home; Jehan returned for other visits as well. Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel, Prime Minister Fukuda of Japan, President Giscard d'Estaing and his wife, Anne-Aymone, families of the Iranian hostages – all came to Plains to see the Carters and to discuss various public and personal issues.<sup>104</sup> Carter shared his pride concerning his town and fellow citizens with his international guests. As Plains resident Ida English recalled,

"He comes on down by the projects and let all the women come out and meet whoever he's got with him – say Sadat. And Sadat thought that was wonderful, that he really got to talk to the people."<sup>105</sup>

In 1984, the Carters also became interested in a not-for-profit, Christian housing project called Habitat for Humanity. The project had been conceived of by Millard Fuller and Clarence Jordan of Koinonia Farms in the late 1960s and initiated in the 1970s. Both Carters serve on administrative boards for the project which sponsors house building projects for homeless families all over the world – in Plains and Americus as well as in Africa and in New York City.

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104. Bearss, Oral History Interview with Reverend Dan Ariail, Pastor, Maranatha Baptist Church, Plains Georgia, 18 December, 1985, 9; Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady*, 354-355; James C. Bonner, *A History of Georgia Agriculture, 1732-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1964) 32; Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), ix-xii; Walters, *History of Plains*, 141; O'Brien, conversation with Reverend Dan Ariail, Maranatha Baptist Church, 6 November 1990; Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains Georgia, 11 May 1988, 54; Hugh Carter, *Cousin Beedie*, 309-326. Maranatha Baptist Church has been a source of local healing over civil rights issues. Built on land donated by the widow of segregationist Y.T. Sheffield, it also attracted Hugh Carter, cousin of the President, who initially supported the segregationist agenda. Two weeks before he died, William Alton Carter, former mayor of Plains and patriarch of the local Carter clan known for his racist viewpoints, also joined the congregation. It would seem that through the actions of the widow of Y.T. Sheffield and William Alton Carter, tacit agreement concerning race issues was finally reached after the fact by certain leading members of community that lacked Jimmy Carter's initial courage to stand up for the things in which he believed. (See Hugh Carter, *Cousin Beedie*, 324-326)

It is interesting to note that after the Revolutionary War, Count d'Estaing of France was given a 20,000 acre grant by the American government in Franklin County, Georgia even though he was not a citizen of the United States. The grant was made in increments of 5,000 acres over a number of years. According to Dr. Steven Hochman, President Carter's research assistant, President Giscard d'Estaing of France claims to be of the same family. (See Bonner, *Georgia Agriculture*, 32.)

105. Bearss, Oral History Interview with Ida English, Plains Georgia, 21 December 1985, 32.

Volunteers, including the former President and First Lady, take time to travel and work with others, building shelters for the homeless and helping them to realize a better life.<sup>106</sup>

In this manner Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter turned a national political defeat into an international personal triumph. Upon their return they caused Sumter County and the village of Plains, catapulted into national and world politics during the Carter administration, to merge with the rest of the world. It became, in some senses, a humanistic manifestation of Marshall McLuhan's global village, serving the world's people and acting as host to its leaders in a way that its founders would never have been able to comprehend. In other ways, the town, like its most famous residents, remained unchanged – a southern village complete with all the regional quirks, successes and failures that made it, and them, unique to American history. The Carters shared the positive experience of their community and town with both national and international communities in an unaffected and sincere manner. Miss Julia would not only have been proud – she would have been sincerely pleased and edified to know that her faith in the "Ultimate Good" has found confirmation in her students and fellow townspeople.

The Carters continued to be active with a variety of other projects as well. The presidential library in Atlanta and the adjacent Carter Center and Emory University facilities put into practical application President Carter's interests in the study of the American presidency and global issues. "My emphasis is building a capacity at the Carter Center of preventing war and ending war," stated Carter. "It's the way I intend to spend the rest of my life. It's a dream I don't intend to have frustrated." The Carter Center builds on the dreams of former presidents such as Carter's hero, Harry S. Truman and his idea of a library and a center for the study of the presidency and world policy. Like the Trumans, the Carters' post-presidential lives in Plains are unassuming, marked only by the entrance to the presidential compound off the main highway and the presence of Secret Service personnel who move quietly in and out of the community. And like the Trumans, the Carters maintain a keen interest in the work of the National Park Service in planning for the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District. Their involvement represents a unique opportunity in historic resource planning and management to be able to obtain the insights and understandings of a former president and to incorporate that information as an integral

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106. O'Brien, Telephone conversation with Tom Jackson, Habitat for Humanity, Americus, Georgia, 30 May 1990; Bernadette McCarver Snyder, "Habitat for Humanity: The Carter's Help Dreams Come True", *Liguorian* 78 (June, 1990): 4-10.

element of the park planning process. Jimmy Carter is aware of his place in history. He is aware of both the significance of his career and the importance of its interpretation. Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter's own family, now complete with grandchildren, remain in close touch, but now reside outside of Plains. Amy continues her life as a student and, in the Carter tradition, maintains strong and well-thought out points of view backed up with decisive action.<sup>107</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As others have noted, if writer William Faulkner had developed a southern agrarian community with a presidential figure as its centerpiece, he could have done no better than the epic reality that is the story of the Carter family and Plains, Georgia.<sup>108</sup> Accordingly, the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District eloquently illustrates the story of a young man and young woman growing to adulthood in a rapidly changing world and their successes in meeting those changes. It is a story of modern partnerships in marriage, the rejection of former inequitable relationships and the attempt to establish parity in married life. It is a story that stresses the importance of family, not only the genetic, nuclear and extended family, but the family of town, county, region, state, nation and globe. It eloquently illustrates an individual's and a community's attempts to address the difficult questions of race and religion. It underscores the difference between average educational opportunities and what can happen when teachers care to take extra, important steps in the instruction of their charges. It illustrates the importance of technology and its impact on agriculture, transportation, communication, industry, and personal services. Finally, it is a story of both success and failure, and the ability of a man and his family to meet both with equal courage and dignity, and to forge from both experiences positive truths that they willingly share with both their immediate community and their larger world family. Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter have brought to the town of their birth a vision of the world at large and given the world the special gift of their own community.

Baptists have a term for a public expression of faith – they call it witnessing. The history of Plains, Georgia, and of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter are a type of historical witness. In both their private

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107. Mary Ellen Barrett, "How Jimmy Will Save The World," *USA Weekend The Denver Post* 15-17 March 1991, 1.

108. Tom T. Hall, as quoted in *Billy*, vii.

and political lives, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter not only witnessed to their religious faith, but also to their deep faith in humanity. They have borne their successes with modesty and shared them with their hometown. In doing so, they have honored Plains and the community which gave them their strong, positive principles as well as the state, national and international communities where those principles were brought to fruition and put into practice. From the region's beginnings as a homeland of the Creek Nation, various peoples clashed and fought over dominion of Sumter County's red Georgia clay. But positive attributes also evolved in the society of southwest Georgia based in a sense of family and community. Plains, having strong family and church structures, supported education and its possibilities for its young people. The attitudes engendered in these environments such as family loyalty, sense of community and ethical courage served as a stable base to build on as Jimmy Carter and Rosalynn Smith grew to adulthood in the 1930s and 1940s.

Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter are part of this complex region and its history. Carter has said, "I am a Southerner and an American", underscoring a strong identification with both the land and its culture.<sup>109</sup> They grew up breathing the air of Plains, walking along its red dirt roads, eating the food that sprang from its soil. More than that, they lived with both black and white in the context of rural Georgia in the 1930s and 1940s. They lived with racial ambivalence as part of their daily lives; they saw the sharecroppers as they worked the fields and worked with them. They benefitted from their friendship and wisdom, barely questioning as children the caste system that kept them both close and apart. But while they were from the land and community of southwestern Georgia, they were also different. Through their families and the world of Julia Coleman and the Plains High School, they glimpsed the bright possibilities of a larger world based on the solid foundation of their own local experience. With the help of others in their community, they acted on those possibilities. They used the positive forces inherent in Plains and their extended families to guide their town and nation to a new and more just day. But to act on those possibilities – to build on certain long-time, established positive standards and to fly in the face of negative ones – took a special courage all their own. Their convictions and actions not only improved and broadened their own lives, but, ultimately, those of their nation and home town as well.

Jimmy Carter is not a hero in the classical sense. He would be the first to deny any such appellation. But the times in which he grew up and lived called for heroic action, and he

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109. Mazlish/Diamond, 14.

responded. If Jimmy Carter's life story has all the elements of classical triumph and tragedy, it is because he dared to act upon his convictions. And as he dared, he dared not only for himself but for his community, for Plains and for his country, as well. But Carter's portion of its legacy remains uniquely his, for he looked beyond the usual way of doing things and took the history of his home town into national and international arenas. The personal history of Jimmy Carter and the community history of Plains have become integral parts of each other in a way that few people and communities have the privilege to experience. It is the symbiotic experience of the of the individual and the general – of the person and the community in which they live, be it local, national, or international. Such dynamics give great events and great people a chance to evolve. Jimmy Carter acted on those opportunities with the sense of ethics and purpose he received during his Plains childhood, becoming an important part of his community's history and personifying the hope of the New South.

Jimmy Carter is fond of quoting theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. It was Niebuhr who observed, "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary." Niebuhr also noted, "It is the sad duty of politics to bring justice to a sinful world".<sup>110</sup> In one sense, the story of the Carter family and Plains is just that – an attempt over generations to form just lives in an imperfect world. Such tasks are difficult for the individual, who seeks to order the world, while, at the same time, the world makes him who and what he is.<sup>111</sup> But it is from the resulting dynamic that history is made. The history of Jimmy Carter and Plains, Georgia represents not only the dreams and hopes of a president; it represents the positive experience of individuals and a community whose faith and willingness to share of themselves gave to the American nation and the world a history and message of enduring hope and perseverance.

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110. Gary M. Fink, *Prelude to the Presidency: The Political Character and Legislative Leadership Style of Governor Jimmy Carter*. (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), 4, 8, 17.

111. Pois, "Historicism, Marxism and Psychohistory", *passim*.



# Part Two: Inventory and Assessment of Cultural Resources – Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District



## INTRODUCTION

This section assesses the extant cultural resources in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District (JCNHSPD) in the context of the region's history and the life of Jimmy Carter. It uses as a framework the various time periods as delineated in the historical background section. After the assessment section, a discussion follows regarding the status of Plains as a cultural landscape and the implications of such status. Recommendations for National Historic Landmark status for the Plains Preservation District and the implications of such designation are also discussed. Finally, this section concludes with recommendations for future research, additions to the survey data base and a bibliography concludes this section of the study.

The Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District (JCNHSPD) consists of a number of overlapping local, state and federal designations. In 1978, the General Services Administration requested and received a Determination of Eligibility for the Plains Historic District from staff attached to the National Register of Historic Places. The boundaries established conformed to those of an earlier local historic district. The National Register of Historic Places, in cooperation with the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office, placed the Plains Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places on June 28, 1984. On December 23, 1987, the 100th Congress of the United States passed Public Law 100-206 establishing the JCNHSPD with additional sets of boundaries and scenic easements. In June 1990, state historic preservation staff attached to the Middle Flint Area Planning and Development Commission and the City of Plains expanded the local district designation to include all buildings and areas within the corporate limits of Plains. As of June 1991, five overlapping yet separate districts and designations, each with their own regulations and boundaries, have been adopted to comprise the legislative parameters of Plains historic preservation: The local historic district; the National Register district; the federal National Historic Site (discontinuous); the federal Plains Preservation District; and various federal scenic easements. The local district has adopted a historic preservation ordinance with a review commission. The National Register District operates under a number of federal enabling statutes, as does property within the National Historic Site; both have Advisory Boards that monitor their actions. The National Register designation also entails cooperative administration with the State Historic Preservation Office. Scenic easements, when negotiated, will operate under a separate strata of federal legislation and legal agreements with property owners. Additionally, the Preservation District is eligible for yet a sixth designation – that of a National

Historic Landmark District. This will involve yet another boundary and layer of administration if and when such action is taken. All actions and designations are based in various pieces of national, state and local historic preservation legislation. Administrative boards include the Plains Historic Preservation Commission, Plains Historic Trust, the Plains City Council, the Middle Flint Regional Planning Commission, the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site Advisory Board and the National Park Service Advisory Council.<sup>112</sup>

Surveys include one made by the state of Georgia in the 1970s of both Plains and Sumter County; a survey of 6 structures made at an undetermined date, prior to 1985; a *National Register of Historic Places* nomination form prepared by Andrea Niles for the State of Georgia in 1984; a survey of Plains prepared for the National Park Service by Sandra Dixon in 1985; and a buildings survey by staff of the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) in 1989. Currently, state staff attached to the Middle Flint Planning Commission is revising and expanding the Plains and Sumter County inventories. To date, 23 structures and sites have been specifically identified and documented as important to the interpretation of the story of the Carters and Plains.<sup>113</sup>

All references to themes refer to the thematic categories as established in *History and Prehistory in the National Park System and the National Historic Landmark Program* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1987).

## EXTANT SURVEY ELEMENTS – JIMMY CARTER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE AND PRESERVATION DISTRICT

The following buildings, structures and sites are elements important to the interpretation of Plains and the life and career of President Jimmy Carter. Twenty-three of the sites were documented including elevations and photographs, by Elizabeth Barthold and the staff of the Historic

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112. Andrea Niles, "Plains Historic District", *National Register of Historic Places* nomination form (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1984), 2, passim; United States Congress, Public Law 101-206, (101 Stat. 1436, December 23, 1987); Town of Plains, Georgia, Ordinances: To Establish the Plains Historic District (Town of Plains, Section 14, November, 1976), passim; To Expand the Boundaries of the Plains Historic District (Town of Plains, Section 14, pending July 1990), passim; To Establish A Historic Preservation Commission In the City of Plains Georgia (Town of Plains, Section 14, 6 June, 1990), passim.

113. O'Brien, Telephone conversation with Karen Oliver, Historic Preservation Planner, Middle Flint Area Planning and Development Commission, 12 June 1990; Dixon, passim; Barthold, passim; Niles, passim.

## EXTANT SURVEY ELEMENTS – JIMMY CARTER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE AND PRESERVATION DISTRICT

The following buildings, structures and sites are elements important to the interpretation of Plains and the life and career of President Jimmy Carter. Twenty-three of the sites were documented including elevations and photographs, by Elizabeth Barthold and the staff of the Historic American Building Survey/Historic American Engineering Record in 1989. Detailed structural and historical information is included in the HABS/HAER forms.<sup>114</sup>

Additional sites have been included as well. Because of the ongoing survey of Plains by the Middle Flint Regional Planning Association and the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office, additional sites appear only as recommendations. Formal inclusion of these sites in the Special History Study Inventory will occur by amendment upon completion of the work by the these agencies.

### I. Prehistory to 1827

Sites of this period are limited to archeological resources. Eleven sites in Sumter County were noted by the University of Georgia's Archeological Site file in 1989. As of 1986, five archeological reports referencing the region were on file with the State Archeologist's Office in Atlanta. No

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114. Provenance of the HABS/HAER documentation consists of the following:

In 1979, an anonymous photographer took large format photographs of the Carter Boyhood Home and Commissary, Billy Carter's Service Station and the Carters' current home on Woodland Avenue.

In the summer of 1989 historian Ms. Elizabeth Barthold wrote histories and description of 23 buildings; Mark Harrell took large-format photographs of all the structures except for the Carters' home on Woodland Avenue. Four HABS/HAER architects measured six of the buildings – Plains High School, the Jimmy Carter Boyhood Home and Commissary, Apartment 9A in the Plains Public Housing Project and the Plains Depot. Architects created eighteen sheets of drawings, including site plans, ground plans, elevations of each building facade and specific details of each structure.

In October of 1989, James R. Lockhart took large format photographs of the Plains High School Gymnasium and a tenant house on the Carter Boyhood Home property that were added to the HABS/HAER files in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

structures or buildings surviving from this period are presently known to exist in the study area.<sup>115</sup>

## II. 1827-1865<sup>116</sup>

Only one site, a residential structure, has been identified for this category to date.

### Stewart Residence

- A. Name: Stewart Residence
- B. Other Names: Wise Residence, Rylander House
- C. Location: South side of Cemetery (Old Americus-Preston) Road, 0.2 miles southwest of Highway 280.
- D. Date of construction ca. 1855.
- E. Architectural style: Vernacular
- F. Alterations: Minor.
- G. Materials: Wood, Brick.
- H. Condition: Excellent.
- I. Significance: The Rylander House is the only extant ante bellum structure in the Plains area presently known to exist. The house was built about 1854-55 by Matthew Rylander for his second wife and six children. Rylander built his home in the settlement of Lebanon. He was active in the Methodist Church, working as a circuit rider and establishing a congregation in the Plains of Dura. His eldest son, John Emory, and his wife taught at the Magnolia Springs Seminary. The Rylander farm was typical of the agricultural operation of the time. At the time of the Civil War, the farm consisted of 500 acres with 6 mules and horses, 12 cattle, 100 hogs and sheep, a 4-horse wagon and 20 slaves. Rylander asked that

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115. Map, *Recorded Archeological Sites By County In The Georgia Archeological Site File* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1989); *The Profile*, 4; Morgan R. Crook, Jr., *A Strategy for Cultural Resource Planning in Georgia* (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 1986), 24.

116. All information in the following section dealing with specific information on individual properties is taken from the previously cited Historic American Building Survey as conducted in July of 1989 unless otherwise indicated. More detailed information regarding individual structures is available in the HABS report.

his property not be divided or sold until peace was declared. He died in 1880. His wife, Sarah, continued to live at the farm, until her death in 1897.

The house was acquired by the husband of Matthew Rylander's daughter Aughtrey, R.S. Oliver of Plains in 1897 for \$5,000. The house was sold in 1917 to E.R. Stewart, son of Matthew Rylander's daughter, Mary. In November, 1940, the property was purchased by Charles Crisp, a former Speaker of the House, who sold it on the same day to Dr. S. P. Wise. Wise died in 1944, leaving the property to his brothers Thad and Bowman Wise. Bowman sold his interest in the home to Thad Wise. In 1954 Thad Wise sold the house to Mr. R.E. Sullivan; he continued to live in the house until his death in 1956.

That same year, Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter rented the house, living there until 1961, when they built a new home on Woodland Drive. During this period, Jimmy Carter intensified his political activity in Plains and Sumter County, serving on a variety of local boards and organizations. Also at this time, he built up his father's peanut business into a thriving agricultural concern. During their residence in this house outside of Plains, Carter was also approached by the White Citizen's Council for membership. He turned them down. The relative isolation of the Rylander House's rural Georgia countryside environment undoubtedly caused the Carter family some concern for their safety during this troubled period.<sup>117</sup>

The home is not only important as an architectural resource; it is part of the local folklore of Plains. Known as the "haunted house," the residence has figured in local folklore as the home of Civil War ghosts for over 50 years. The only other element of the ante bellum settlement of Lebanon in existence is Lebanon Cemetery, approximately a quarter of a mile southwest of the Rylander property.

The home is also important in interpreting the life of Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter in Plains. It represents their first home after a brief postwar residence in public housing. It was during this period that Carter first made his decision to run for public office. It was also during this period that the most intense civil rights controversies took place in the

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117. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2205, 5-7.

Plains/Sumter county region. The site represents the themes of Civil War, Agriculture and American Ways of Life.<sup>118</sup>

- J. Current Status: The Rylander Residence is not part of the Plains Historic District nor is it included on the National Register of Historic Places. It is presently located within the proposed scenic easement boundaries of the JCNHSPD.

### III. 1865-1900

Two structures, a rail depot and a commercial structure, are included in this section.

#### Plains Depot

- A. Name: Plains Depot
- B. Other Names: Savannah, Americus and Montgomery Railroad Depot
- C. Location: Northwest corner of South Hudson and Main Street.
- D. Date of construction: 1890.
- E. Architectural style: Vernacular.
- F. Alterations: Minor
- G. Materials: Wood
- H. Condition: Good
- I. Significance: In 1886, a 37-mile narrow gauge railroad, the Americus, Preston and Lumpkin, opened for service between the county seat and Lumpkin, Georgia. According to local tradition, residents of the communities of Plains of Dura, Magnolia Springs and Lebanon moved to property near the tracks owned by M.L. Hudson and M. C. Carey. In 1888, the rail line was bought by the Savannah, Americus and Montgomery Railroad; the same year Plains became a transfer point for shipments west. By May of 1890, the new depot served the people of Plains.<sup>119</sup>

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118. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2205, 6; *History and Prehistory in the National Park System* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service History Division, 1987), I-9, 12, 20.

119. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2209, 2-3.

Five years after the completion of the depot, the railroad was sold to the Georgia Albany Railway. In 1900, the Seaboard Airline acquired the railway and depot. Between 1902 and 1990, the railway became a part of various business deals, changing its name five times during those years. A number of passenger and freight trains passed through Plains each day, including a local called "The Butthead". Until the 1930s, when the Wise Sanitarium moved its operations to Americus, the passenger traffic was augmented by patients coming to Plains for treatment at the hospital facility. All depot waiting rooms and facilities were racially segregated. In 1917, 76 cars of hogs and cows were shipped from Plains; in 1920-21, between 6,000 and 10,000 bales of cotton were shipped from the town. Passenger service ended in 1951.<sup>120</sup>

The Plains Depot gained national notoriety in 1976 during the presidential campaign of Jimmy Carter. The building, used by businesses in Plains as a warehouse after its discontinuance as a passenger facility in the 1950s, was leased to the Carter Peanut Warehouse in the 1970s. Having used his peanut warehouse on Main Street for his gubernatorial campaign, Carter chose to use the Plains Depot as the center for his Presidential campaign. Although Carter's national political headquarters were located in Atlanta, the Plains Depot created an effective hometown backdrop against which many campaign gatherings and functions were organized and announcements were made. The building was cleaned and painted white and "Carter Green" by Carter's brother Billy and other friends. It opened on Easter Sunday, 1976; staff from the Atlanta office were sent to Plains to deal with the flood of mail and visitors. Local political supporters talked train lines into rescheduling freights so as not to disrupt planned events when the Carters periodically returned to Plains during the campaign. Both the candidate's mother, Miss Lillian and his mother-in-law, Miss Allie, worked the campaign headquarters. On election eve, 1976, a large television screen was set up by the pharmacy across the street and bonfires in cans were lit to keep people warm. A large crowd at the depot broke into pandemonium upon announcement of Carter's victory. On January 19, 1977, more than 100 supporters boarded an 18-car Amtrak train at the depot to travel to Washington, D.C.

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120. Barthold, HABS No. GA 2209, 3-5.

for Carter's inauguration. Carter returned to the station after his defeat in 1980 where the Plains community welcomed him home beneath gray skies and rain.<sup>121</sup>

The building continued to be popular with tourists during the Carter presidency. In 1986, the Chessie Seaboard Corporation (CSX) donated the depot structure to the Plains Preservation Trust. The Trust in turn donated the building to the National Park Service in 1988. Today it serves as the Visitor Center for the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site. The depot is a singular symbol of the Plains community, the Carter campaign and the successful promotion of an individual community member to the Presidency of the United States.<sup>122</sup>

The building is important in illustrating the life and career of Jimmy Carter both as an artifact of Plain's days as a railroad and commercial town, as well as its use as a presidential campaign headquarters. The structure has become a symbol both of Plains and of the 1976 Carter presidential campaign. The building reflects the themes of Communication, Transportation, Technology, Business, and Political and Military Affairs after 1945.<sup>123</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District. It is on the National Register as an element in the Plains Historic District.

### **Oliver-French-Shields Building**

- A. Name: Oliver-French-Shields Company
- B. Other Names: Hugh Carter's Antiques
- C. Location: Seventh building from the east between Hudson and Bond Street, Plains, Sumter County, Georgia.
- D. Date of construction. ca. 1896

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121. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2209, 3-5.

122. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2209, 5.

123. *History and Prehistory*, 1-13-16, 20.

- E. Architectural style: Vernacular Italianate
- F. Alterations: Minor
- G. Materials: Brick in American bond
- H. Condition: Good
- I. Significance: The Oliver-French-Shields Company building represents the first brick building to be erected in the town of Plains. Prior to the building's construction, a series of one-story frame buildings with single-gabled roofs orienting from north to south, lined Main Street on the south side of the track and served as the commercial structures for Plains. In 1902, an addition was constructed on the east side. Mr. French left the firm and started a business with Lunsford and Timmerman; John McDonald later joined Oliver at which time the firm became known as the Oliver-McDonald Company.<sup>124</sup>

It was in the Oliver-McDonald Company that William Alton ("Uncle Buddy") Carter, brother of Earl Carter, first went to work in 1905 at the age of 17. The firm operated both as a retail business selling seed and fertilizer and also as a broker for cotton and cotton seed products. In 1910 the business employed 10 people; it also operated as an undertaking establishment with Mr. Ross Dean in charge of that section of the business. Mr. Dean also acted as partner and secretary-treasurer of the Oliver-McDonald Company. He purchased the store from the estate of R. S. Oliver in 1928. Alton Carter who, in 1907, opened his own store, the Plains Mercantile Company, bought the building in 1941. Carter served as Mayor of Plains in the 1920s. He also sold mules and ready-made clothing and operated a bank as well as a general store. After the economic crash in 1929, Carter continued to run a bank of sorts from the building. The store operated for sixty years until 1971, when W.A. Carter sold it to his son Hugh. The building now operates as a antique store.<sup>125</sup>

The Oliver-French-Shields building represents the initial arrival of the Carter family in Plains in 1905. It was from this point that the family's economic and political influence began to develop. From the town's first brick structure, William Alton Carter gained experience that enabled him to begin his own business down the street just two years

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124. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2220, 2.

125. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2220, 2-3.

later. From this beginning he built a series of successful local enterprises and also served in local politics. His brother Earl (known locally as "Turk") was also successful in local economic and political circles. "Turk"'s son, Jimmy, inherited both his father's and uncle's business and political acumen and would later apply these traits to his own career. It is important to the overall streetscape of the area. The building reflects the themes of Business and American Ways of Life.<sup>126</sup>

- J. Current Status: The Oliver-French-Shields Company building is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District. The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District.

#### IV. 1900-1920

This section contains 11 buildings; 6 commercial, 2 religious, one residential and 2 medical.

##### **Plains Bank**

- A. Name: Plains Bank
- B. Other Names: Hugh Carter's Worm Farm Office
- C. Location: Fifth building from the east end of the commercial block on Main Street, between Bond and Hudson Streets
- D. Date of construction: 1901
- E. Alterations: Minor.
- F. Architectural style: Vernacular
- G. Materials: Brick, Wood
- H. Condition: Good
- I. Significance: The Plains Bank was organized in 1901. According to one source, the bank was the second one in town, the first being organized by the Timmerman family in a building on the east side of Bond Street at an undetermined date. The Plains bank was run by R.S. Oliver as president, B.T. Wise as vice-president and C.C. Lunsford as Cashier (later replaced by W.L. Thomas.) By 1918 the bank was getting positive press from *Americus*.

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126. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2220, 2-3; Hugh Carter, 6; *History and Prehistory*, I-13, 20.

Capital stock was noted at \$25,000, with only \$1,000 of that being from sources other than Plains. The bank closed in January of 1919.<sup>127</sup>

William Alton Carter bought the structure in 1928 as an addition to his Plains Mercantile Company. In the 1920s, the Plains Post Office moved into the structure. During the 1930's W.A. Carter's son, Hugh, and his nephew, Jimmy, sold hamburgers and boiled peanuts from the window of this building on the weekends. Both women and men served as postmaster in Plains: Mrs. Jessie Mae Glenn and Mrs. Mary Hudson Campbell both served as postmasters; Mrs. John Melton and Mrs. Allie Smith, mother of Rosalynn Carter, served as clerks. Mr. Robert McGarrah became postmaster in 1945 and worked in the bank building until 1964, when the post office was moved up the street to new facilities. Afterwards, Hugh Carter moved the offices of his mail order fish bait company into the building.<sup>128</sup>

The Plains Bank Building is important to the early history of the Carter family in Plains as well as the boyhood years of Jimmy Carter. It reflects the consolidation of William Alton Carter's business dealings in Plains. It also illustrates the relationship between W.A. and Earl Carter's families and the early business experiences of Jimmy Carter as a boy. The building reflects the themes of American Way of Life and Business.<sup>129</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

#### **Forrester General Store**

- A. Name: Forrester General Store
- B. Other Names: Bonnie and Gene's Hairstyling
- C. Location: Southwest corner of Hudson and Main Streets

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127. Walters, 25-26; Barthold, HABS No. GA-2218, 2.

128. Walters, 87; Barthold, HABS No. GA-2218, 3.

129. *History and Prehistory*, I-13, 20.

- D. Date of construction: 1902
- E. Alterations: Minor
- F. Architectural style: Vernacular
- G. Materials: Brick, Wood
- H. Condition: Good
- I. Significance: The building was built by W.L. Thomas, cashier of the Plains Bank. Thomas also sold coal, wood and fire insurance. Thomas rented this building to W.H. Forester and Company who operated a general merchandise store and also acted as city clerk. In 1919, Jimmy Carter's father, Earl, ran a store in the building, which also boasted a meat market. With the depression of the 1930s Carter closed the store and moved most of his stock out to his store on the farm in Archery.<sup>130</sup>

Oscar Williams and Frank Timmerman, business competitors of the Carters, purchased the building in 1938. Mrs. Frank Timmerman sold her interest in the building to the Williamses in 1941. The building was used for cotton storage until the 1950s. It is now vacant. The rear of the structure houses a small barber and beauty shop. President Carter has his hair cut there when he is in Plains.<sup>131</sup>

The building is representative of the early business success of Earl Carter, particularly at the time of his marriage to Miss Lillian Gordy. It also illustrates the business competition between the Carters and other families in town. It has valuable connections to the story of the Carters and the Archery farm, regarding Earl Carter's early experience here running his own mercantile business. It is important to the overall streetscape of the area. The building reflects the themes of Business and American Ways of Life.<sup>132</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

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130. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2214, 2.

131. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2214, 2.

132. *History and Prehistory*, I-13, 20.

### **Lunsford-French-Timmerman General Store**

- A. Name: Lunsford-French-Timmerman General Store
- B. Other Names: Turner's Hardware Store
- C. Location: Fourth building from the east in the commercial block between Bond and Hudson Streets
- D. Date of construction: 1902
- E. Alterations: Minor
- F. Architectural style: Vernacular
- G. Materials: Brick, Wood
- H. Condition: Good
- I. Significance: The Lunsford-French-Timmerman store represents one of a number of general merchandise stores that operated in the Plains during the first years of the 20th century. The company began in 1902. Its last year of operation was 1910 when R.S. Oliver bought the building and leased it to William Alton Carter, who had begun the Plains early Mercantile Company in 1909. Carter continued to run his building from the structure until the 1930s, when he moved into the Oliver-McDonald Building down the street.<sup>133</sup>

Hewlette Carlton leased the building after Carter's move to the Oliver-McDonald building. In 1939, H.B. and LaVert Moman rented the structure and opened the M and M Cash Store. The Momans retired in 1965, selling the building to Judson Smith, who in turn sold it to Ernest and Betty Jean Turner, who opened a hardware store. The Turners continue to run a hardware and second-hand business from the building.<sup>134</sup>

The Lunsford-French-Timmerman General Store is representative of the retail outlets in Plains in the early 20th century. It has important ties to the career of William Alton Carter as his first place of business in Plains in 1909. It is important to the overall streetscape of the area and reflects the themes of Business and American Ways of Life.

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133. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2217, 2.

134. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2217, 3.

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

### **Oliver-French Company**

- A. Name: Oliver French Company
- B. Other Names: Sandcraft Gift Shop; Simply Southern Gift Store
- C. Location: Sixth building from the east of end of the commercial block on Main Street between Main and Hudson Street
- D. Date of construction: ca. 1902
- E. Alterations: Minor
- F. Architectural style: Vernacular
- G. Materials: Wood, Brick
- H. Condition: Very Good
- I. Significance: This structure was built in 1902 to accommodate the Oliver-French Company. Later, the Oliver-McDonald Company occupied the building, dealing in general merchandise and cabinetry for casket work. In 1913, an annex was added on the west side with a mortuary located on the second floor.

During the 1910s the second floor of this structure was used by the Furlow Masonic Lodge No. 124. Later, the space housed Plains' first telephone company. In 1928, the store was sold to John Oliver who operated the Oliver Company. Claude Leonard Walters purchased the business in the 1940s and renamed it the Walters Grocery Company. In the 1960s, the Woodmen of the World rented the upstairs space for meetings, and in 1972, it became a self-service grocery. In 1975, the Sandcraft gift shop opened in the building. After the tourism boom, a wall paper and sheetrock business operated in the rear of the building. A gift store now operates in the structure on a seasonal basis.<sup>135</sup>

The building represents one of the many mercantile and grocery stores serving Plains in the first part of the 20th century as well as the varied nature of these operations. It also illustrates the importance of fraternal orders to the male component of the Plains

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135. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2219, 2.

community, as well as the impact of technology represented by the first telephone company. The building also represents those businesses active during the Carter campaign years and the effect of the Carter presidency on the local economy. It reflects the importance of economics and community structure and relationships. The building represents the themes of Business and American Ways of Life.<sup>136</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

### **Plains Baptist Church**

- A. Name: Plains Baptist Church
- B. Other Names: Lebanon Baptist Church, Plains Baptist Church, Inc.
- C. Location: Northwest corner of Bond and Paschal Streets
- D. Date of construction: 1906
- E. Alterations: Major – Originally built in a Latin Cross plan, the structure received an educational building on the west end in the 1920s and a concrete block pre-school addition in the 1950s. The building's original wood clapboard siding was covered in aluminum at an undetermined date.
- F. Architectural style: Carpenter Gothic
- G. Materials: Wood, Concrete Block
- H. Condition: Very Good
- I. Significance: The congregation traces itself from the Baptist Church of Christ founded in 1848 on the site of the present Lebanon Cemetery, 1.5 miles southwest of Plains. In 1889 the congregation moved from the community of Lebanon to the new town of Plains after the construction of the railroad. Originally located on the south side of the rail line, the church acquired this property in 1905 and built the structure in 1906 at a cost of \$6,000. The congregation changed its name from Lebanon Baptist to Plains Baptist in 1909. Dancing and card playing were specifically prohibited in the new structure.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136.</sup> *History and Prehistory*, I-13-20.

<sup>137.</sup> Barthold, HABS No. GA-2212, 2.

The congregation continued to grow in the 1920s and 1930s. Jimmy Carter attended Sunday School and was baptized there in 1935. His wife, Rosalynn Carter, joined the Baptist congregation in 1954. In the 1960s the Plains Baptist Church became the focus of national attention. In 1965, during the height of the civil rights crisis in the South, Plains Baptist Church, voted to refuse to admit "Negroes or any other civil rights agitators." Previously, blacks had been invited for weddings, funerals or other special occasions; however, the congregations were not "in fellowship". The motion carried 54 to 6 with 5 members of the Carter family voting against the measure; over 200 members abstained. In 1976, a black minister requested membership at Plains Baptist before the presidential election and was refused. In 1977, arguments over racial matters caused a number of members to split from Plains Baptist to form Maranatha Baptist Church.<sup>138</sup>

Plains Baptist Church is important to the story of Jimmy Carter as the congregation of his youth and center of his adolescent social activities. The church is important in the interpretation of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and its effect in the rural south. It is illustrative of the difficult social issues facing Jimmy Carter and his family as he began his work in the state and national political arena. The building reflects the themes of American Ways of Life and Social and Humanitarian Movements.<sup>139</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

### **Rosalyn Carter Childhood Home**

- A. Name: Rosalynn Carter Childhood Home
- B. Other Names: W.H. Crawford House; Mrs. Frances Allethea (Miss Allie) Smith House
- C. Location: 219 South Bond Street
- D. Date of construction: ca. 1907-20
- E. Alterations: Moderate

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138. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2212, 3; Walters, 91-92.

139. *History and Prehistory*, 1-20-21.

- F. Architectural style: Vernacular Queen Anne
- G. Materials: Wood, Brick
- H. Condition: Very Good
- I. Significance: Built in the 1920s by W.H. Crawford, a local blacksmith, the house became the home of William Edgar and Allethea Murray Smith in 1928. Their first child, Rosalynn, was 16 months old when they moved into the house. William Smith worked at a garage and drove the local school bus. Rosalynn attended Plains Grade and High School where she met her best friend, Ruth Carter. She spent weekends with her friend at her house in Archery; Ruth also spent weekends at the Smith home in Plains.

When Rosalynn was 13, her father contracted leukemia, dying in 1941. Her mother then went to work, taking in sewing, working in the school cafeteria and as a clerk at the Plains Post Office. Rosalynn helped her mother by working at the local beauty parlor. Rosalynn Smith graduated from Plains High School as valedictorian in 1947.

Rosalynn Smith married Jimmy Carter at the age of 18 and left Plains for a life as a Navy wife. Miss Allie, Rosalynn Carter's mother, still lives in the home. After retiring from her position at the Post Office, Miss Allie worked as a volunteer at the Plains Depot during the Carter campaign. Today she remains active in civic and church affairs.<sup>140</sup>

The Rosalynn Carter Childhood Home is important in providing a context for the early life of the First Lady and reflecting the historical environment of Rosalynn Carter's formative years in Plains. It is also important in establishing the historical continuity that is so much a part of Plains. Its position on the south side of the tracks in Plains may also evidence certain themes regarding class structure in the town as reflected by residency patterns and the relationships of various groups to one another. The building reflects the theme of American Ways of Life.<sup>141</sup>

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140. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2203, 2.

141. *History and Prehistory*, 1-20-21.

- J. Current Status: The building is not on the National Register nor is it included as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

### **Plains Methodist Church**

- A. Name: Plains Methodist Church
- B. Other Names: First United Methodist Church
- C. Location: South side of Highway 280 across from the intersection of Thomas Street
- D. Date of construction: 1910
- E. Alterations: Major – The original gaslight fixtures were converted to electricity in 1919. A two-story education building was added on the east side of the building in 1937. Six new light fixtures were installed in the auditorium in 1940. The auditorium was renovated, with floors and woodwork being refinished and repainted and new carpet and curtains installed, in 1950. The original Latin Cross plan of the building was altered with the addition of the Fellowship Hall in 1956 and the south window on the crossing on the east facade was changed to a doorway during this period. A covered walkway was built from the church to the Fellowship Hall in 1966. Plexiglass was placed over the stained glass windows in 1977 and wall to wall carpeting installed in the auditorium and educational building in 1981.
- F. Architectural style: Vernacular Romanesque
- G. Materials: Brick, Concrete
- H. Condition: Excellent
- I. Significance: The present congregation traces its origins to the Tabernacle Methodist Church founded in the 1840s and originally located about three miles north of Plains. In 1865, the congregation gave their building to an A.M.E. congregation and bought a building near Magnolia Springs. The congregation moved to the present site when Plains was platted in 1888. The town proprietor, M.L. Hudson, donated the property for a Methodist Church. The congregation changed its name to Plains Methodist Church and built a frame building with a porch. This served until 1910, when it was razed and the present brick edifice was constructed. The building committee consisted of some of the

more prosperous members of the community: John McDonald, R.S. Oliver, E.R. Stewart, W.S. Moore and R.M. Andrews. Services were held every second and fourth Sunday.<sup>142</sup>

Rosalynn Smith and her family were members of the Plains Methodist congregation. It was on the steps of the church that Jimmy Carter first asked Rosalynn Smith out. They were married at Plains Methodist Church on July 7, 1946. Rosalynn Smith Carter later joined the Plains Baptist Church in 1954.<sup>143</sup>

The Plains Methodist Church is important in understanding both the Plains community, its make-up, and the place of the Carters in that community. In 1888, Plains was founded by a small mercantile and professional class comprised mainly of Methodists and Lutherans; they, however, were the minority congregation in town. Baptist interests overshadowed these earlier groups as the years progressed. Methodist and Baptist church members moved easily from one congregation to another, sometimes alternating on Sundays when their own group was not meeting. As in most rural settings, the class structure was tied to both economics and religion.

Plains Methodist is important not only as the site of the Carter nuptials; it is an important element in the make-up the community structure as well. The place of the Plains Methodist Church in the civil rights activities of the 1960s is unclear at the present time. The building reflects the theme of American Ways of Life.<sup>144</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

### **Ross Dean Funeral Home**

- A. Name: Ross Dean Funeral Home

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<sup>142</sup>. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2211, 2.

<sup>143</sup>. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2211, 2, Rosalyn Carter, *First Lady of Plains*, 23-26.

<sup>144</sup>. *History and Prehistory*, 1-20-21.

- B. Other Names: Peanut Museum
- C. Location: Second building from the east in the Main Street business block between Bond and Hudson Streets
- D. Date of construction: 1912
- E. Alterations: Minor – Original front sliding doors have been replaced. A sprinkler system was added in the 1950s.
- F. Architectural style: Vernacular
- G. Materials: Brick, Wood
- H. Condition: Good
- I. Significance: Mr. Ross Dean, a business partner in the Oliver-McDonald Company serving as secretary-treasurer of the company, opened a funeral parlor in the building in 1912. He continued his business at that site until 1912 when he moved up the street to a new addition to the Oliver-McDonald Company. The cabinetry works of the company supplied Dean with caskets. A mule- drawn hearse could be pulled up to the front of Dean's establishment; sliding or folding doors on the building made casket access more convenient. In the 1930s the Williams Cotton Warehouse purchased the building for warehouse and storage use. Later, the it was used for general storage.

During Jimmy Carter's campaign for the presidency, the Williams family opened the Peanut Museum, complete with a video on peanut farming and displays of old equipment. The building is now closed; however, much of the equipment is still stored in the structure.<sup>145</sup>

The Ross Dean Funeral Home is an important element in understanding the daily life of late 19th-century and early 20th-century Plains. The hub of social and commercial life, outside of church and school, was the business district of which the undertaking establishment was an important element. Not only were adequate embalming services required in such a climate – the funeral director and his assistants were an important extension of the family. The undertaker assumed many of the former duties of the family in preparing the body for burial. The dead were still buried from the home or church during this period, however.

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145. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2215, 2.

Like other businesses in Plains, the funeral industry was strictly segregated. Blacks either buried their dead without benefit of mortuary services or took them to a black-owned and operated undertaking establishment in Americus. As with many other service-related businesses, the segregation philosophy of the region allowed Mr. Dean to employ both black and white help at his establishment. The local undertaker enjoyed the status of having a required, specialized skill in a small town such as Plains. It was from the estate of Mr. Ross Dean that young Jimmy Carter purchased a number of rental properties in the 1940s. The building reflects the themes of Business and American Ways of Life.<sup>146</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

#### **Oliver-McDonald Company**

- A. Name: Oliver-McDonald Company
- B. Other Names: Hugh Carter's Antique Store
- C. Location: Eighth building from the east in the Main Street business block between Hudson and Bond streets.
- D. Date of construction: 1913.
- E. Alterations: Minor
- F. Architectural style: Vernacular Italianate
- G. Materials: Brick, Wood
- H. Condition: Good
- I. Significance: This new annex for the Oliver-McDonald Company occupied the site of the former Plains Pharmacy, run by J.E. Chappell. Upon completion of this annex, Mr. Ross Dean moved his undertaking establishment to the second floor about 1917. A hand-driven elevator made the movement of caskets, bodies and furniture from the first to second floor easier. Mr. Dean purchased this building, as well as the one to the east, in the 1930s. His business thrived. Upon his death, equipment included three hearses and various

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<sup>146</sup>. Bill Cutler, "Americus The Beautiful: The Town That Kept The Carters Out", *Brown's Guide to Georgia*, (November, 1980): 41-47; Conversation with Mrs. (Jewell) Mattie Wiley, Plains Georgia, 6 June 1990; *History and Prehistory*, I-13, 20-21.

embalming tools. After Dean's death in 1941, the establishment was purchased by his assistant, Mr. J.C. Webb, had worked for Dean since he was 12 years old. Webb, who studied mortuary science in New York and operated a funeral home in Montezuma, Georgia, returned to Plains and retired in the 1940s. The building was sold to William Alton Carter in 1944 who expanded his plains Mercantile operation into the structure. W.A. Carter's son Hugh now sells antiques and souvenirs in the building.<sup>147</sup>

The building symbolizes the importance of the funeral industry in the early 20th century community of Plains. It also has important connections to William Alton Carter, Hugh Carter and their respective businesses. The building represents the theme of Business.<sup>148</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

#### **Wise Sanitarium No. 1**

- A. Name: Wise Sanitarium No. 1
- B. Other Names: A.C. Wellons Building
- C. Location: Third building from the east on Main Street business block between Bond and Hudson Streets
- D. Date of construction: 1916
- E. Alterations: A fire around 1920 damaged the second floor space. A roof was replaced that compromised much of the second floor space. A two-story porch located on the main facade of the building was removed and replaced by a one-story canopy at an undetermined date. Later, the front area of the second floor over the west section of the building was refurbished with electrical, paint, linoleum and drop-tile ceilings. The first floor on the west was altered in 1976 when it became the Back Porch Cafe. A kitchen and rest room were added in the back; a divider was added to the center. Acoustical ceilings were added to the eastern half of the first floor as well.

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147. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2221, 2-3.

148. *History and Prehistory*, 1-13.

- F. Architectural style: Vernacular Italianate
- G. Materials: Brick, Wood
- H. Condition: Good
- I. Significance: This building, originally intended as a hotel, housed both retail establishments on the first floor and the Wise Sanitarium on the second. The Wises located their hospital here until a fire destroyed the operation; the Wises moved to their newly completed Wise Sanitarium on Hospital Street around 1920. The old hospital employed a number of nursing staff, and had a kitchen and a dining room. On the first floor, the east half of the building over the years housed a dentist's office, a barber shop, a grocery and a pharmacy. In 1934, James Earl Carter, Sr., rented the space and began a peanut warehouse business. He purchased the east portion in 1943. It was this building that Jimmy Carter returned after his father's death in 1953 to manage the family's peanut interests. W.L. Thomas ran an insurance agency in the west section of the east portion of the building. Carter used this building as a campaign headquarters when he ran for state senator and for governor of Georgia. A large sign on the second story obliterates the windows; it was put up during Carter's gubernatorial campaign by a local Plains citizen, Jerry Roberts, and read "Jimmy Carter, Our Next Governor." The sign was repainted to reflect Carter's governorship, his campaign for president and his presidential victory. Gloria Carter Spann inherited the building from her father. It is now the property of her husband, Walter Spann. The west half of the building was opened in 1976 as the Back Porch Cafe. A gift shop occupied the space after the restaurant closed. The building is now used for storage.<sup>149</sup>

The building represents a number of important themes in the life and career of Jimmy Carter and Plains. Its connection to the Wise Sanitarium is significant in that it reflects the transition of this firm's medical practice from a country operation to a modern facility built specifically for medical purposes. The Wise family in addition to being a family of progressive physicians, managed extensive land holdings in the Plains area. The building also represents an important period of James Earl Carter, Sr.'s career when he began his peanut seed brokerage business. Jimmy Carter began his adult business life in Plains at this building upon returning from the military service in 1953. The building is important as the headquarters for both his senatorial and gubernatorial campaigns. The sign located

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149. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2216, 3.

on the building is significant as an indicator of both civic pride and of the importance and power of the Carters and their local political organization during Carter's bid for governor. Finally, it is also illustrative of the effect of the Carter presidential campaign and presidency on the business community of Plains. The building is representative of the themes of Technology, Science and Business.<sup>150</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

### **Wise Sanitarium No. 2**

- A. Name: Wise Sanitarium No. 2
- B. Other Names: Plains Convalescent Home, Inc.
- C. Location: North side of Hospital Street 0.2 miles east of Bond Street
- D. Date of construction: 1917-1921
- E. Alterations: Major – Due to an explosion in 1936 and its use as a nursing home facility since 1956, the building has experienced significant changes. The Building was vigorously remodeled in 1960. In 1967 a sprinkler system was installed. In 1974-1975 the front portico was bricked in to make an office. The west porch has been enclosed to make a sitting room. The gabled portico over the front entrance was removed at that time. The north two bays of the west facade that originally served as an ambulance porte cochre has been walled in and the roof was replaced with shingles in the 1970s. A number of windows have also been altered.<sup>151</sup>
- F. Architectural style: Vernacular Italianate/Classical
- G. Materials: Brick, terra cotta, stucco, wood
- H. Condition: Fair to Excellent
- I. Significance: The Plains Sanitarium reflects both the early history of Plains and the history of the Wise family. Burr Thomas Wise was the first mayor of Plains and an extensive property owner and farmer in the area. His three sons, Burr Thaddeus Wise, Sam Wise

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150. *History and Prehistory*, I-13, 14, 16.

151. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2213, 3.

and Bowman J. Wise graduated in 1908, 1911 and 1914 from Tulane University with degrees in medicine. In 1912 the Wise Brothers established the first hospital in Plains on the second floor of the Plains Pharmacy. Four years later the hospital was moved to the second floor of the A.C. Wellons building on Main Street. A fire at this location preceded their move into the new facility around 1920. A training school for nurses also operated in Plains as an adjunct to the hospital at the Nurse's Home from 1917 to 1936.<sup>152</sup>

The \$75,000.00 facility was a source of pride for the Wise family and Plains. Reportedly, much of lumber used to build the structure came from the Wise farm in Plains. The hospital had an X-Ray room, an operating room and a radium department. On October 1, 1924, Lillian Carter gave birth to a son, James Earl Carter, Jr., at the hospital. Jimmy Carter was the first American president to be born in a hospital. His mother remembers being in a small room in the west wing of the hospital; however, Dr. Sam Wise, who delivered the baby, claims that delivery took place in the east wing delivery room. Both recollections are probably correct; Miss Lillian could have been assigned an individual room in the west wing but taken to the delivery room in the east wing at the time of actual delivery.<sup>153</sup>

On January 21, 1936, a fire broke out in the hospital. No one was injured, but after the fire, two of the Wise Brothers relocated their practice in Americus. Bowman Wise continued his practice in Plains. The building remained vacant, but was used later as temporary housing for dependents of World War II soldiers. It was sold by E. J. Wise, President of the Hospital and James E. Carter, Secretary, in 1956. Since that time the former hospital has been used as a convalescent and nursing home.<sup>154</sup>

The Wise hospital is important to the Carter story for a number of reasons. First, it represents the effect of medical technology on the town of Plains and is indicative of the community's high standards of progressive and innovative institutions. Second, it is an important element in the story of women's history in Plains and of the career opportunities that women began to pursue in the early decades of the 20th century with

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152. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2213, 3; Walters, 101.

153. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2213, 4.

154. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2213, 5.

nursing and related programs. It is also important as the site of the first presidential birth in a modern hospital facility in the history of the United States. Additionally, James Earl Carter, Sr.'s position on the Board of Directors and his son's later position as secretary of the hospital association reflects the status of the Carter family in Plains and their position in the community. The kinship of Rosalynn Carter to the Wise family is another important element in assessing the importance of family and kinship networks in the history of the Carters and Plains. The building is representative of the themes of Science, Technology and Business.<sup>155</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

## **V. 1920-1941**

This section contains three buildings; one commercial, one educational, and one residential.

### **Plains High School**

- A. Name: Plains High School
- B. Other Names: Plains School
- C. Location: West side of Bond Street, opposite Paschal Street
- D. Date of construction: 1921
- E. Alterations: None
- F. Architectural style: Classical Revival/Palladian
- G. Materials: Brick, Concrete
- H. Condition: Fair
- I. Significance: Erected in 1921, this building replaced an earlier frame structure that served as the Plains educational facilities from 1900 to 1921. The first school cost \$1,800 to erect. In 1921, the frame building was sold to the all-black Johnson Industrial College,

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155. Bearss, Oral History Interview with President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, 11 May 1988, 133; *History and Prehistory*, I-13, 14, 16.

dismantled, and moved to Archery. The new school, built at a cost of \$50,000, housed both grade and high schools. Julia Coleman and Y.T. Sheffield remained the leaders of the school faculty with Miss Coleman serving as both principal from 1912 to 1927 and as Superintendent from 1927 to 1949. Sheffield also served as Superintendent at a later date.<sup>156</sup>

The Plains School boasted of a model curriculum and faculty. In 1937 its programs were cited as models for other Georgia schools. The school had 13 teachers and 259 students. The school was also commended for its work by various Washington, D.C., officials. With Miss Julia at the helm of the Humanities, and Mr. Sheffield managing the business, mathematics and physical education programs, the students of Plains were able to experience many amenities not available to other southwestern Georgia high school students of the time. Miss Julia, in addition to taking a special interest in favorite students, established a garden on the west lawn of the school with an element known as "baby row." Each time former students married and had children, a bush or shrub was planted by the parents on the grounds. A large library was established in the school and Miss Julia sponsored plays and brought Chautauqua performances to town. In 1949, a marker on the school grounds was dedicated to Miss Coleman, who retired in 1958 and died in 1973. In her fifty years of teaching at Plains she positively affected the sense of community and duty in many of her students. One of these students was James Earl Carter, Jr.<sup>157</sup>

Y.T. Sheffield managed the business and mathematics curriculum. He was responsible for building a gymnasium that bore his name until its destruction by fire in 1938. Sheffield became superintendent upon the retirement of Julia Coleman in 1958. Later, in the early 1960s, he opposed integration of the local system. In the midst of the civil rights controversy, Y.T. Sheffield retired in 1965. He committed suicide two years later.<sup>158</sup>

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156. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2206, 3; Walters, 93.

157. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2206, 4.

158. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2206, 5; Hugh Carter, *Cousin Beedie, Cousin Hot*, 55. In the 1960s most county schools were divided into primary and secondary facilities. The primary facility was located at Rosenwald school, the formerly black segregated school in Plains in 1970. In 1979, Plains High school closed and students began attending classes at the county high school in Americus. Southland Academy, established in 1967, represents the reaction to integration in the region. Its support by white families in the area still effectively enforces de facto segregation in education in Sumter County.

The importance of Plains School cannot be overestimated in the story of Plains and Jimmy Carter. Its curriculum, teachers and facilities were exemplary for the times and pointed to the outside world and inspired students to look beyond its environs. Its auditorium represented the only non-denominational meeting place in Plains. Its school board served as the first political arena in which the future president served. Its segregated school system was a battleground for integration in the 1960s.

Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter's educational and cultural background were initially formed here. It was at Plains High School that Carter was first exposed to ideas that would ultimately lead him to the Middle East Peace Talks, to support of environmental policies and to the successful conclusion of the Iran hostage crisis. The building is representative of the themes of Education, Technology, Social and Humanitarian Movements and American Ways of Life.<sup>159</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

### **Jimmy Carter Boyhood Home**

- A. Name: Jimmy Carter Boyhood Home
- B. Other Names: Plexico Place
- C. Location: North side of Old Americus Preston Road. 2.3 miles southwest of Highway 280 outside of Archery, Georgia.
- D. Date of construction: 1922
- E. Alterations: Indoor plumbing and electricity installed in the 1930s. The front porch was screened and awnings were added in the 1940s. The family that purchased the home in 1949 made \$20,000.00 worth of improvements, removing a wall between the kitchen and breakfast area, and removing the hallway wall in Jimmy Carter's boyhood bedroom to create a family room. Dropped ceilings were added to the interior and aluminum siding was added to the exterior at undetermined dates.
- F. Architectural style: Bungalow

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<sup>159</sup>. *History and Prehistory*, I-16, 19-21.

- G. Materials: Wood, Brick
- H. Condition: Good
- I. Significance: James Earl Carter, Sr. and his family moved to this house in 1928, six years after it had been built by the Plexico family. The house is typical of a middle class rural dwelling in southwestern Georgia in the 1930s. Heating was originally accomplished by fireplaces and space heaters. Initially, there was no running water and electricity was not available until 1937. The floor plan was simple, with a large hall running from front to back with three rooms located on either side of the hall. The community of Archery, on the outskirts of which the Carter farm was located, was almost exclusively black and many of Jimmy Carter's boyhood friends were black. Later, such experiences influenced Carter's later political stands.<sup>160</sup>

Carter's childhood consisted of life on the farm with his stern father, working mother, and two younger sisters. (His younger brother Billy was not born until a number of years later.) The Carter farm in Archery occupied approximately 300 acres that grew peanuts, corn, cotton, pecans, vegetables and other typical southwest Georgia products. A syrup mill, blacksmith shed, mule barn, hog pen, chicken coop, outhouse, commissary and various sharecroppers cabins completed the scene.<sup>161</sup>

More than any other environment in the Plains area, the Carter farm at Archery reflects the background and influences that contributed to the development of Jimmy Carter's personality. Carter made his home on the farm from 1928 until his departure from when he left for college in 1941. It was in this rural environment that Carter grew to young manhood. His work in the fields, his interest in hunting and the environment, his background in farming, his business acumen and his later interest in civil rights were all developed as he mopped cotton, hunted doves, worked the fields, raised stock, worked in his father's store at the farm and interacted with his father's employees and sharecroppers. The farm affected the development of a large part of his life and continues

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160. Barthold, HABS No. GA-245, 3.

161. Barthold, HABS No. GA-245, 4.

to comprise some of his most vivid memories concerning his childhood. It represents the themes of Agriculture, Technology, Business and American Ways of Life.<sup>162</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is not on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element of the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

### **Billy Carter Service Station**

- A. Name: Billy Carter Service Station
- B. Other Names: Phillips 66 Station; B.J.'s Pitt Stop
- C. Location: 216 West Church Street
- D. Date of construction: ca. 1930
- E. Alterations: The building, originally a simple, single gable structure, was added on to at the rear by Billy Carter some time after 1972. A large refrigerator was also added to the interior. Bobby Salter purchased the building in 1981 when the shed area on the west side was enclosed for office space. An explosion later caused some damage on the east side which has been repaired.
- F. Architectural style: Vernacular (functional)
- G. Materials: Wood
- H. Condition: Fair
- I. Significance: Located on a lot known locally as the "hotel" lot, the building was moved to the vacant hotel site in 1956 when Milt Jennings purchased the frame structure from the Jones Sprinkler Company in Plains and moved it to the present site for use as a gas station. Previously, the building had been used by the Jone's daughter for ballet practice. Billy Carter purchased the station in 1972.

Long a gathering place for the men of Plains as a informal social hall, the building did not prosper as a filling station until Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign. Billy Carter, after obtaining a license to sell beer, became a nationally known figure, dispensing beer, fuel and earthy humor to the tourists who lined up to buy gas and gawk at the local oracle. Billy continued to run the station until 1981, when he sold it to an Illinois

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162. Barthold, HABS No. GA-245, 4; *History and Prehistory*, I-12, 13, 16, 20.

businessman as a publicity stunt. It was sold the same day to Bobby Salter, a friend of Billy Carter's and a local resident of Plains. Salter now runs the station and a tour bus business, as well.<sup>163</sup>

One of the most important events to take place during Billy Carter's gas station business was his half-serious attempt to run for Mayor of Plains on a "No Progress" ticket. Carter, feeling that his brother's success had created too many changes in the town, humorously ran for Mayor, "as an example of prosperity without progress." This attitude is important in understanding the South and the town of Plains and has been noted by historians such as David Thelan, Michael Cassity and Merritt Roe Smith.<sup>164</sup> The suspicion of outside influences threatening the established order and the power of those in charge often prompt such reactions as people perceive a threat to community structure. While it is true that Billy Carter ran for office as a stunt, the basis for his campaign has a ring of truth to it. It is an important element in understanding the so-called "backwardness" of the South and rural America in general – an attitude that does not necessarily bespeak backward attitudes but, rather, a fear of losing one's grip on an established power structure. Billy's long-standing conflict with his older brother, together with a self-acknowledged drinking problem, explain in large part his remarkable behavior during the Carter presidency. The building reflects the themes of Business and American Ways of Life.<sup>165</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

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163. Barthold, HABS No. GA-243, 3; O'Brien, Field Inspection, Plains Georgia, 12, February, 1991.

164. Citations for these historians are included in the history section of this study on page 35.

165. Barthold, HABS No. GA-243, 3; Thelan, *Paths of Resistance*, passim; Cassity, *Defending a Way of Life*, passim; Smith, *Harper's Ferry and the New Technology*, passim; *History and Prehistory*, I-13, 20-21.

## VI. 1941-1953

Two buildings are included for these years; both are residential.

### Plains Public Housing 9-A

- A. Name: Plains Public Housing-9A
- B. Other Names: Jimmy Carter Dura Apartment; Dura Apartments Public Housing Project
- C. Location: Southeast corner of Paschal and Thomas Streets
- D. Date of construction: 1953
- E. Alterations: Minor
- F. Architectural style: Utilitarian
- G. Materials: Brick, Concrete
- H. Condition: Excellent
- I. Significance: The end of World War II and returning veterans created a housing shortage across the nation. Plains was no exception. In 1953, James Earl Carter, Sr. died. Lillian Carter asked her oldest son to return to run his business and farms. After a brief stay with Miss Lillian, the Carters moved to their first home together in Plains – a public housing project sponsored with federal funds by the local mayor, W.A. Carter, and the city council of Plains. Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter qualified for the space because they had no guaranteed income after returning from military service. Returning servicemen may have been given preference for accommodations, although this fact has not been verified. Jimmy and Rosalynn lived here with their three sons. Nineteen fifty-three was a drought year and the profits from Earl Carter's former peanut business were small. By the second year, Jimmy Carter had made too much money to qualify for public housing and moved to other quarters.<sup>166</sup>

The public housing site is important to the Carter story for several reasons. It is indicative of the federal government's "New Deal" and "Fair Deal" legislation in the Roosevelt/Truman era regarding public housing. It represents the Carters' initial return to Plains after the sophisticating influences of college and naval life. It reflects a period in which Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter redefined themselves as adult members of the Plains

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<sup>166</sup>. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2210, 2-3.

community. It was a period of economic and political uncertainty for Jimmy Carter as he worked to salvage his father's business and to build it back into a profitable enterprise. The building represents the theme of American Way of Life.<sup>167</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

### **Lillian and Earl Carter House**

- A. Name: Lillian and Earl Carter House
- B. Other Names: Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter's Plains Office
- C. Location: South side of Georgia Route 280 between Walters and Thomas streets
- D. Date of construction: 1948-1949
- E. Alterations: Minor
- F. Architectural style: English Tudor (vernacular)
- G. Materials: Brick, Wood
- H. Condition: Excellent
- I. Significance: Earl and Lillian Carter built and moved to this house in 1948-1949 after Jimmy Carter had left Plains for Annapolis. The house was built by local labor from locally produced materials. Ruth and Jimmy had left home by this time. Gloria lived there one year, while Billy Carter spent his teenage years in the house. After Earl Carter died in 1953, Lillian Carter continued to own the structure; however, she worked as a house mother at the university in Athens, Georgia and at a nursing home. In 1968, Miss Lillian joined the Peace Corps, living in India for two years. In her absence, her children built a new house on the site of the old Pond House near Archery that Earl Carter had built in the 1930s, which had burned. When media converged and the invasion of personal privacy during the presidential campaign became too much, Miss Lillian moved out to the Pond House. She continued to live there until her death in 1983.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup>. *History and Prehistory*, 1-20-21.

<sup>168</sup>. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2207, 2.

Beginning in 1980, Jimmy Carter rented the house in Plains from his mother until her death. After purchasing it from the estate of his father in 1984, he and Rosalynn moved their offices into the building. Most of Jimmy Carter's business is currently handled from his office in Atlanta; however, Mrs. Carter still handles the majority of her affairs from this building with the assistance of office staff who have been working with her since the days of the Carter governorship.<sup>169</sup>

The Lillian and Earl Carter House is important in that it represents the success of James Earl Carter, Sr. both as a businessman and a politician; he ran for state senator in the early 1950s and served on the local school board. His brother, W.A. Carter, was mayor of Plains in the early 1950s. Its function as the residence of Lillian Carter and as the current offices of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter also give the building added significance. The building reflects the themes of American Ways of Life and Business.<sup>170</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

## VII. 1953-1962

Two elements are included under this heading. One is a residential building. The other is a complex made up of multiple structures.

### Jimmy Carter House

- A. Name: Jimmy Carter House
- B. Other Names: None
- C. Location: 209 Woodland Drive
- D. Date of construction: 1961

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<sup>169</sup> Barthold, HABS No. GA-2207, 2.

<sup>170</sup> *History and Prehistory*, 1-13, 20.

- E. Alterations: In 1974, a number of changes were made to the house. A screened-in porch on the north was converted to a sun room. The garage was converted to an office; a new two-story garage was built on the rear of the original garage. A second floor apartment in the garage provides guest facilities for visitors. All alterations were managed by the firm of the original architect, Hugh Gaston.<sup>171</sup>

After President Carter's return from Washington in 1981, the new garage was converted into a woodworking shop. A tongue-and-groove floor was installed in the attic area. In the early 1980s, a wall between the master bedroom and the bedroom to the south was eliminated to enlarge the master bedroom and to provide for a small dressing room. A pine floor was added to Amy Carter's bedroom by Amy and her parents in 1981.<sup>172</sup>

- F. Architectural style: Ranch
- G. Materials: Brick, Wood, Concrete
- H. Condition: Excellent
- I. Significance: After eight or so years of building up the local peanut business, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter found themselves ready to purchase a permanent home of their own. Mr. Sullivan would not sell the Rylander House; Jimmy Carter then hired architect Hugh Gaston to design a new house for his family on the west end of town in a wooded area. The house was designed so it could be expanded as needed.

The modest ranch-style structure served as the Carters' home for nine years. The Carters were not often at their home in Plains from 1970 to 1981. In 1970, they moved to Atlanta upon his election as governor of Georgia. From there, they moved to Washington, D.C. in 1977 after his election to the presidency. The house played important roles as a site for meetings and planning sessions during Carter's gubernatorial and presidential campaigns.

After their return to Plains in 1981, Jimmy and Rosalynn created a new life for themselves in their hometown, writing memoirs and devoting themselves to a number of humanitarian projects. The house immediately to the south of the Carters, known as the Gnann House, was purchased by the Secret Service in 1977. A fence – formerly located

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171. Barthold, HABS No. GA-244, 2.

172. Barthold, HABS No. GA-244, 2.

at President Nixon's home at Key Biscayne, Florida – was installed for security reasons in 1982. A 4.5 acre parcel across Woodland Drive serves as a recreational area for the Carter property and has a fishing pond. A wayside exhibit, brick walkway and split rail fence allow visitors limited access to this area. The fence and walkway were installed by the Carters as a family project in the 1980s. The wayside exhibit was installed by the National Park Service about the same time.<sup>173</sup>

The Carter Home on Woodland Drive represents an important period in the political and private lives of Jimmy Carter. It represents the tangible success of his work with the local family peanut business and it is the only house the Carters have ever owned. It was built by an architect that the Carters met through friends and acquaintances in Americus that would later prove to be instrumental in his gubernatorial and presidential careers. The home was built during Carter's initial entry into regional politics. The building reflects the period when Carter increased his participation in the local Lion's Club, library and hospital boards, certified seed organizations and regional and state planning commissions. Later, it would serve as the site for both gubernatorial and presidential campaign planning sessions. It was the only private home Amy Carter would know as a child. Before his presidency, Carter met with a variety of personages here, including Henry Kissinger, George Bush and Walter Mondale. After his presidency, he entertained dignitaries such as Anwar and Jehan Sadat, Menachem Begin, Giscard D'Estaing and other notable figures at the house. The Carters chose to return to this house after 1981, making their home here and using the house as the center of their private lives as they pursue a variety of international humanitarian agendas.<sup>174</sup>

The Carter Home on Woodland Drive in Plains is an important focal point in understanding the importance of the life and career of the 39th president. It reflects the major themes of his political development and presidency and is important in understanding Carter's view of the world and his place in it. It underscores the importance of both family and home in the Carter story and reflects the modesty and unpretentiousness of Carter's personality. The Carter home in Plains is the centerpiece in

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173. Barthold, HABS No. GA-244, 2-4; William Patrick O'Brien, conversation with Chief Agent Bill Bush, Secret Service, Plains, Georgia, 6 December 1990.

174. Barthold, HABS No. GA-244, 3.

interpreting the "global village" concept so eloquently illustrated in the visits of international figures to Carter's community and his treatment of those visitors as members of his own family in Plains. The Carter home illustrates the themes of American Way of Life, Social and Humanitarian Movements, Conservation of Natural Resources and Political and Military Affairs after 1945.<sup>175</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

### **Carter Peanut Warehouse Complex**

- A. Name: Carter Peanut Warehouse Complex
- B. Other Names: Golden Peanut Company
- C. Location: Southeast corner Main and Bond Streets
- D. Date of construction: 1959-1961
- E. Alterations: Approximately 11 buildings and structures. Various additions in 1975-1981-1986. Additions were made to the 1961 office structure in 1976-81 and in 1986, consisting of a concrete block addition for office space, a government grading room and a kitchenette. Other minor additions and alterations have been made to the warehouse and silo structures as required over the years.
- F. Architectural style: Contemporary/industrial
- G. Materials: Wood, Metal, Brick
- H. Condition: Very Good
- I. Significance: The Carter Peanut Warehouse Company represents a significant element in the life and career of Jimmy Carter. It represents his interest and talent in business and his ability to adjust and diversify that business as needed. The company and its operating plant, as presently constituted, is the result of Jimmy Carter's assumption of the family business in 1953 and family operation of the plant until its sale in 1981. Returning from the service in 1953, Jimmy Carter took over his father's wholesale peanut business in the midst of a drought year. The first year the business cleared \$187.00. Rosalynn assisted in the keeping of the company records and books. By 1956, two large warehouses were

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175. *History and Prehistory*, I- 20, 21.

added to the property. By 1962 a new office replaced the old business office in the Wellons Building. Billy Carter was also active in the business.<sup>176</sup>

The building is illustrates the themes of Business and American Ways of Life.<sup>177</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District. The other buildings are not a part of the Plains Historic District or the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

#### **VIII. 1962-1966**

No buildings identified to date.

#### **IX. 1966-1974**

One residential building has been identified and documented to date.

##### **Pond House**

- A. Name: Pond House
- B. Other Names: None
- C. Location: West Side of Fish Pond County Road 96 0.5 miles south of Plains Highway intersection
- D. Date of construction: 1968
- E. Alterations: None
- F. Architectural style. Rustic/modern
- G. Materials: Wood, Concrete Block

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176. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2202, 2-5.

177. *History and Prehistory*, I-13, 20-21.

H. Condition: Excellent

I. Significance: Designed by architect Hugh Gaston in 1968 with the assistance of Mack Wakeford and J.M. Yielding, this building was constructed to replace an earlier structure built by James Earl Carter, Sr., ca. 1938. The original house was built as a recreational retreat by the elder Carter and fronted on an artificial lake which he kept stocked with bass and bream. The original Pond House burned in the 1960s.<sup>178</sup>

Lillian Carter joined the Peace Corps in 1966 at the age of 68, serving two years as a nurse in India. Her children had the new Pond House designed and built for her in her absence. She was surprised with the new residence at a welcoming home party when she returned to Plains. As Jimmy Carter became better known during his political campaign, Lillian Carter moved to the Pond House to escape the annoyance of tourists and curiosity seekers. In 1976, the house was used as a site for a million dollar fund raiser priced at \$5,000 a plate. Celebrities such as Armand Hammer attended, dining on food prepared by local citizens. P.J. Wise and Maxine Reese planned and executed the event. Lillian Carter continued to live at the Pond House, with security provided by the Georgia State Highway Patrol, until her death in 1983. Her wake was held at the Pond House.<sup>179</sup>

The Pond House is important to the Carter story because it reflects the prosperity of James Earl Carter, Sr., in his building of a purely recreational structure for his family. The site also reflects the financial success of Jimmy Carter in his building of a new Pond House for his mother with proceeds from the peanut business in the late 1960s. Its connections with the Carter presidential campaign fund raisers and strategy sessions are also important. The site reflects the upper middle class status of Carter family, both in the 1930s and in the 1960s and is important in placing the Carter story in its proper socio-economic context. The building represents the themes of American Way of Life and Political and Military Affairs After 1945.<sup>180</sup>

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178. Barthold, HABS GA-2204, 2.

179. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2204, 3.

180. *History and Prehistory*, I-10, 20.

- J. Current Status: The building is not on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is not an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

#### **X. 1974-1980**

One religious building has been identified to date.

##### **Maranatha Baptist Church**

- A. Name: Maranatha Baptist Church
- B. Other Names: None
- C. Location: East side; Georgia highway 29, 0.4 miles north of Hospital Street intersection
- D. Date of construction: 1978
- E. Alterations: None
- F. Architectural style: Modern/Vernacular
- G. Materials: Brick, Wood
- H. Condition: Excellent
- I. Significance: The Maranatha Baptist Church was formed in 1977 by members of the Plains Baptist Church who split over differences regarding policies on integration of the congregation during the Carter presidential campaign. Twenty-nine members of the congregation left in May of 1977, setting up the Bottsford Baptist Mission in an abandoned Lutheran church. By 1978, the group had constructed this building which they formally dedicated in January 1979. The congregation split during the Carter's presidency and there was much speculation as to which Baptist group Jimmy and Rosalynn would join when they returned to Plains. Although they attended both churches for a while, they finally moved their membership to Maranatha Baptist. They regularly teach at the Sunday School, perform maintenance work and serve on the church's board of directors.<sup>181</sup>

The Maranatha Church reflects the importance of civil rights in the Carter story and its effect on the community of Plains in the 1960s and 1970s. It also reflects the importance

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181. Barthold, HABS No. GA-2208, 2.

of church in the life of the community and the networks that form around family, school and church. It is also important in the story of the Carters' post-presidential years and their commitment to church and social issues. The building represents the themes of American Ways of Life and Social and Humanitarian Movements.<sup>182</sup>

- J. Current Status: The building is on the National Register as part of the Plains Historic District. It is not an element in the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

## **XI. 1980-1990**

No buildings identified at present

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182. *History and Prehistory*, 1-20-21.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL SURVEY ELEMENTS PLAINS, GEORGIA

The following 125 elements are important to the Carter story and should be considered to ensure their preservation and interpretation. The list is not inclusive or complete; efforts should be made to include such elements as the houses of additional Peanut Brigade members, family members, local officials and similar resources. The State of Georgia has performed a preliminary survey of structures within the city of Plains that is presently being updated by the Middle Flint Planning Commission as part of the town's Certified Local Government Program. Sumter County has also been surveyed by the state office; its survey will be updated in the near future. Some of the listed elements are part of those existing surveys; the remainder should be added to the survey as it is updated.

### Prehistory to 1827

No additional buildings or sites identified to date.

### 1827-1865

NAME	LOCATION
Lebanon Cemetery Site	Archery Road, ½ mile from Highway 280 West; .75 mile from Plains.
Lebanon Town Site	Same as above
Magnolia Male and Female Institute Site	Rabbit Branch Road; near Magnolia Springs Site
Magnolia Springs Cemetery	2.5 miles from Highway 280 on Magnolia Springs Road
Magnolia Springs Site	3 miles north of Highway 280 on Magnolia Springs Road
Plains of Dura Town Site	"Devil's Half Acre" – Jack Slappy Road
Wiley Carter Cemetery Site	400 yards from Highway 45 North on Highway 153

## 1865-1900

Kidd's/Black's/Young's Mill Site	.5 mile from Magnolia Springs Road
M.L. Hudson Home I	109 Church Street
Burr Thomas Wise Home and Sharecropper's Cabins	North Hudson Street
Burr Thaddeus Wise Home (Rylander House)	Archery Road
Captain Murray Farm Cemetery	3.5 miles on and Cemetery Highway 45 South; east 2 and miles at the first road after Hugh Carter's House
Croxton Mill Site	Rabbit Branch Road
Dr. J. Carl Logan House	212 West Church Street
Joe Kater Barber Shop	South Hudson Street
Griffin and Murray Cotton Gin Site	Exact Location Unknown
Grove Park	Church Street; current City Park
Lebanon Baptist Church Site from Plains.	Archery Road, ½ mile from Highway 280 West; .75 mile
Methodist Church Parsonage	Church Street
M.L. Hudson Home II	200 Church Street
Morgan Wise House	423 Buena Vista Road
Mossy Dell School Site	Highway 380 South; second crossroad from right; next crossroad left .25 mile
Plains Hotel Site	Church Street; Carter Filling Station Site
Planters Academy Site	Exact Site Unknown
Samuel Paul Wise Home	Exact Location Unknown
St. John A.M.E. Church Site	Jennings Crossroad; 3.5 miles north of Plains on Highway 308
Tan Yard Site	Exact Location Unknown

Timmerman and Wise Warehouse	100 Block, South Bond Street
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#### 1900-1920

Black Business District	South Hudson Street
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Broadus Wellons House	212 North Hudson
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Chambliss Stable	Corner of Bond and Buena Vista Road
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Cranford Cotton Gin Site	South Hudson Street; Exact Location Unknown
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Cranford House	500 North Bond Street
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David Wise House	209 South Bond Street
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Dr. Frank Cato House	109 Church Street
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Ernest Wellons House	208 North Hudson
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Harrell House	313 North Bond Street
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House of God Church	220 South Hudson
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J.A. McDonald Home	216 Church Street
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J. E. French Home	212 Church Street
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Jennings House	413 North Bond Street
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John Graham Store	South Hudson
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Johnson Home Industrial College Site	Archery-West of the Boyhood Home
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Julia Coleman House and Farm	Corner of Carter Street and Highway 280
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General Myers Store	100 Block of South Hudson
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Logan Park	Across from downtown business district
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Lundsford Gas Station	Corner of Church and Bond Street
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O.A. Williams House	303 Church Street
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Oscar Tommie Store	South Hudson
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Plains Baptist Pastorium	102 Paschal Street
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Plains Institutional School Site	Exact Location Unknown
Mrs. Rosa Lee Pullum House	Exact Location Unknown
Mrs. Lenny Rogers House	Exact Location Unknown
Mrs. Lilla Johnson/Tullis House	South Hudson Street
Mr. Will Rogers House	Exact Location Unknown
Mrs. Mattie Mae Mitchner House	Exact Location Unknown
Reverend Upshaw House Site	Exact Location Unknown
Reverend Macklin Biggins House Site	Exact Location Unknown
Rosenwald School Site	402 South Hudson
Ross Dean Home	205 West Church Street
R.S. Oliver Home	303 West Church Street
Saint Andrews Lutheran Church	304 North Bond
Seaborn Walters House	415 North Bond Street
Shields Home	Exact Location Unknown
Shug Green House	224 South Hudson
Timmerman Home	213 Walters Street
W.A. Carter House	325 West Church Street
Walters/Hawkins House	Exact Location Unknown
Will Thomas House	305 North Bond Street
World War I Allied Airfield Training Area	Highway 280
Y.T. Sheffield House	216 South Bond

#### **1920-1941**

Bishop W.D. Johnson House	Archery Road
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Black Hospital (present Post Office site)	119 West Main
Carter Farm Sites in Webster County	Approximately 4 miles northwest of Plains
Everett Chambliss House	408 North Bond
Jones Sprinkler Company	West side of Pharmacy
Putt Tondee Cafe and Shoe Repair Shop	South Hudson
Williams Cotton and Peanut Plant	Bond Street
Williams Cotton Warehouse	Bond Street
<b>1941-1953</b>	
Plains Country Club	Highway 280 West
Georgia Agricultural Experiment Station	Highway 280 East
Gloria Carter Spann/Walter Spann House	South Highway 45; 1 mile from Plains
Koinonia Farm Site	Highway 49; Approximately 6 miles southeast of Americus
Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Smith House	219 South Bond Street
Lutheran Parsonage	201 Hospital Street
<b>1953-1962</b>	
Buford and Maxine Reese House	504 Buena Vista Road
Murray Smith House	220 West Church Street
<b>1962-1966</b>	
Black Swimming Pool	South Bond Street
Hugh Carter House	2 miles south on Highway 45
Lion's Club Swimming pool	315 Paschall Street

Plains Post Office 119 West Main

#### 1966-1974

Annie B. Jackson Floyd House 335 Church Street

Billy Carter Home I 407 North Bond

Floyd Dry Cleaners 335 Church Street

#### 1974-1980

Back Porch Cafe Plains Business District

Hardball Baseball Diamond Site (School) 300 North Bond

Softball Baseball Diamond Site (Private) Northwest corner of Paschall and Thomas Streets

Gladys Murray House Corner of Church and Thomas Street

Gnann House 402 Woodland Avenue

Ida English House 203 West Main

Kountry Korner Restaurant Highway 280 East of Bond Street

Loren Blanton House 215 North Hudson Street

Maggio Coin Shop 100 Church Street-Garage

Mary Prince House 201 West Main

Maranatha Baptist Church .25 miles north on Highway 45

Maxine's Food Center Buena Vista Road

Oliver/Williams House 303 Church Street

Peterson's Airfield 3.5 miles north on Young's Mill Road

P.J. Wise House 1 mile west on Highway 280 at Rabbit Branch Road

Plains Monitor Building 105 South Bond

Tanner Farm/1980 Club 1.5 Mile East of Highway 45; first left road before Kinchafoona Creek

TV City Site

City Water Tower

**1980-1990**

Billy Carter Home II

Highway 280 West

Reverend Dan Ariail House

213 Walters Street

Norinne's Hair Fashion's

North Walters Street

Plains Habitat for  
Humanity Housing

Subdivision off of South Hudson Street

# Part Three: Relationship of Cultural Resources to the Carter Story: Plains and Sumter County as a Cultural Landscape



The Jimmy Carter National Historic site represents a vernacular, rural cultural landscape in the classic sense. Occupation of the land by Native American, European and African peoples recast the native landscape in an identifiable format and structure. Woods became hunting grounds, hunting grounds became fields, prairies became pastures, streams and forests provided food supplements and building materials. Humans transformed the landscape in order to support human habitation and ambitions. Over time, it came to form an environmental backdrop against which the most basic realities of life were identified and regulated. Agriculture and the seasons controlled much of what could be known about life outside of folk mythology and religion.<sup>183</sup>

Human impact on the natural landscape of Sumter County and Plains changed as cultures changed. In 300 years, the cultural landscape changed from aboriginal use to one dominated by modern American agri-technology. During that time, the cultural landscape has hosted a variety of humanity including both Native American and European; farms reflecting a hybrid of Native American and European methods and crops; African slavery and exploitative sharecropping; the nadir of cotton and nascence of peanuts; and, in recent years, the end of sharecropping and the beginning of truck farming and migrant workers. Also, the cultural landscape has been impacted and changed by technology in both agriculture, transportation and communication.

The cultural landscape of Plains, Georgia reflects a history that remains both illusive as well as deceptive to the casual observer. In constant change historically, it often seems to those living at any one time within its boundaries to be unchangeable, eternal, a land of custom untouched by time. It is this perception of an unchanging environment and landscape juxtaposed against the realities of constant change that often forms a dialectic of violence in the region. Native Americans saw their world as eternal and unchangeable; unable to resist the technology of European groups, they found themselves forced from what they considered to be the land of their fathers. Later, White Southerners, having imposed their own interpretation of life on the landscape, refused to adjust to changes in their world and suffered a similar internecine fate.

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183. Robert Z. Melnick, A.S.L.A., et. al, *Cultural Landscapes: Rural Historic Districts in the National Park System* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1984), 15-29; Linda Flint McClelland, *How to Identify, Evaluate and Nominate Rural Historic Landscapes*, National Register Bulletin Number 30, (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, No Date), 2-8.

One hundred years after the Civil War, The struggles of the civil rights movement of the 1960s brought about similar conflict, again, changing the cultural landscape in terms of white/black relationships and various local institutions.

The transformation of Plains from an isolated rural Georgia settlement to a town thrust into an international orbit by virtue of the political career and ambitions of one of its citizens seems barely noticeable today. As with its earlier history, however, it is here, if one knows what to look for. Constant change, then, in the midst of what, at any one time seems unchangeable and immovable, comprises one of the primary dialectics of the region. The history of that dialectic and its various permutations over time is reflected in the region's cultural landscape.

There are many examples of cultural impact on the native landscape over time in the Plains region. Native American influence on the cultural landscape has been nearly eradicated, save for the occasional archeological site or field of tobacco. Its most enduring influence remains in place names still current in the region: Choctahatchee, Ty Ty, Kinchafonee, Lanahassee. Some animals retain Native American names: opossum, raccoon, skunk. The words, however, belie European influence. They are not of Creek but of Powhatan, Algonquin, and Massachuset derivation, modified by Europeans and applied to the local fauna.<sup>184</sup>

Euro-Americans, primarily those peoples of the British Isles, introduced plantation economies and African slavery to the region of southwestern Georgia. Roads into the region traditionally followed earlier Native American routes. European crops were comprised of Native American corn and tobacco, European grains and exotic introductions such as cotton and indigo. The money crops centered around a western European and American industrial revolution over which they had little control. American farmers established themselves on the land, cutting forests, plowing the soil and harvesting their crops. Depletion of the poor Georgia soils by tobacco and cotton farming caused larger plots to be cleared while depleted soils lay fallow for a season. Farms and fields took on predictable patterns based on earlier European models modified by the needs of the New World. Larger plantations exacted a more pronounced effect from the land. African slavery introduced a new culture to the region. Slave cabins dotted the landscape and their labor served to transform woods into fields and cotton balls into cotton bales. African words such as banjo,

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184. USGS Map, Plains Georgia; *American Heritage Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), 872, 1020, 1148.

goober and yam, became part of the local dialect. Black religious services and music and familial systems retained African roots. The life of white and black remained closely related yet completely separate, creating incredible ambivalence and hostility while at the same time fostering an insidious combination of paternalism and limited community.<sup>185</sup>

After the Civil War, the agricultural landscape as transformed by Euro-and African-Americans remained unchanged – slave cabins became sharecropper's cabins. Communities such as Plains moved to access new technologies such as railroads. Rail lines and roads also marked off and segregated black from white communities, forming separate neighborhoods and retail sections. Later, as cotton suffered the ravages of the boll weevil, the peanut, a South American food crop introduced to North America by way of Africa, replaced the earlier cotton economy. As developing technology enabled farming to become more scientific, institutions such as the Georgia Agricultural Extension Center had a pronounced effect on the landscape, introducing new methods of plowing, fertilizing and harvesting. In the 1960s and 1970s, as sharecropping diminished, truck farming and migrant workers changed the Plains landscape as locals provided places of residence and a liquor store to serve their needs. Roadways continued to follow traditional routes with some minor changes. In general, the routes remained the same – what they led to often changed from generation to generation. And, as it was with the landscape, so was it with the history of the region. The manner in which people interacted was slow to change; the end result of those interactions, however, differed substantially with the passage of time.

The life and political career of Jimmy Carter also affected the cultural landscape of Plains. During his childhood, various elements reflected the earlier history of the town and its establishment. The Grove, a stand of oak trees left from the original wooded area where Plains was established in the 1880s, served as a local park. The house and sharecropper's cabins of one of the Wise family members still stood on the north end of town, a testimony to the agricultural landscape in which the town was founded. These buildings still stand today. Logan Park, a strip of green space on which the businesses of downtown Plains front, hosted Chautauqua performances and housed a number of community memorials that continued to increase in number during the Carter years. Perhaps one of the most noticeable and poignant of the cultural landscape elements in Plains was the "Friendship Garden" established by Miss Julia Coleman at the Plains High School. As each pair

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185. Bonner, *History of Georgia Agriculture*, 49-50; DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 3-12; Genovese, *Roll Jordan, Roll*, 3, 321-22.

of Plains High graduates had children, a bush or shrub was planted in "Baby Row" to commemorate the event; thus, the community literally established itself in a memorial context on the landscape of the institution that probably had more effect on their young lives than any other in town. The Carter campaign caused the State of Georgia to build a Welcome Center outside of town in the 1970s. A baseball field was established close to the Carter home for games between the Press Corps and the Secret Service. Billy Carter continued to run his service station as what many saw as an authentic element of the local cultural landscape.<sup>186</sup>

Plains, Georgia qualifies as both a cultural landscape and as a National Historic Landmark. The general agricultural region with its individual contributions in the persons of President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter reflect a unique symbiosis; the region and its people are one. The manifestation of their history on the landscape of southwestern Georgia constitutes a valuable and important cultural resource represented by a variety of historical themes.

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186. Walters, 51, 93, 94; Barthold, HABS No. GA-243, 3, HABS No. GA-2206, 4.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK STATUS FOR PLAINS PRESERVATION DISTRICT

Plains, Georgia, and its history deserve the recognition bestowed by National Historic Landmark status. A cultural landscape nomination is the logical way to address the multiple issues that attend the city and its history. At present, cultural resource management in the Plains, Georgia, area is served somewhat imperfectly by a local historic district, a National Register district, a National Historic Site and Preservation District and various scenic easements. Each designation carries its own separate legislative imperatives: the local historic district operates under a local preservation ordinance as part of the State of Georgia's Certified Local Government Program as administered by the Middle Flint Planning Commission; the National Register under the Historic Preservation Act of 1966; the National Historic Site and Preservation District designation under Public Law 100-206 (101 Stat. 143) and the scenic easements also under that act.

A National Historic Landmark study in a cultural landscape context would address significant historiographical and geographical issues and could consolidate and simplify some of the present bureaucratic confusion. For example, if the boundaries of the new National Historic Landmark conformed to the local historic district, its establishment would make National Register district boundaries moot, thereby creating fewer and more coordinated historic jurisdictions. Ideally, a National Historic Site and National Historic Landmark District with various scenic easements, together with a similarly constituted local historic district and ordinance operating at the local, county, regional and state levels, would provide a less cumbersome system of management. It is the recommendation of this study that such solutions be considered as part of the General Management Plan for the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following topics need further documentary research and/or specific consideration to enhance the data base for the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District. This list is not a priority list and merely calls out those topics that are most important in future assessments of the JCNHSPD.

- A. A Historic Resource Study is needed for the Park.
- B. Specific Historic Structure Reports need to be initiated for the Boyhood Home, the Depot, Plains High School, the Carter Home and the Pond House.
- C. Further information is needed on the Carter family's role in the changing agricultural history of Sumter county, as crops, land ownership and technology changed.
- D. Further research is needed on the historical development of Jimmy Carter's racial attitudes.
- E. Further research should be conducted on the ancestors of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter.
- F. The political history of Sumter County including the relationship of Plains and Americus needs to be explored. Who was active in political circles in Plains before Jimmy Carter? What kind of political experiences did Carter have before he left for the Naval Academy?
- G. Sharecroppers cabins and the history of sharecropping in Sumter County
- H. The survival of African culture in Sumter County such as folklife, field and work songs, family traditions, etc.

- I. Regional religious utopian communities and their effect on the surrounding community
- J. Andersonville and its relationship with the outlying communities during and after the Civil War
- K. The black community and its evolution from slavery to contemporary life
- L. Ethnography of Plains and Sumter County
- M. Koinonia Farms and its relationship with Plains and Sumter County
- N. Further research regarding the history of ante bellum Sumter County, the Plains of Dura, Lebanon and Magnolia Springs
- O. More information is needed on the political history of the region.
- P. Additional research is needed concerning the effect of Andersonville and the Civil War on the surrounding communities including the Plains of Dura.
- Q. The effect of technology on the region's development needs to be explored. More information is needed on the agricultural history and evolution of Sumter County.
- R. The importance of Afro-and Euro-American musical traditions of Sumter County including Sacred Harp, field songs, ring shouts and similar phenomena needs to be documented.
- S. County population, landholding and other property holding patterns from 1820 to the present day should be analyzed in detail.
- T. The status of Plains and Sumter County as a cultural landscape needs to be expanded.

- U. Additional information is needed concerning the historical landscape regarding Baby Row and Miss Julia's Friendship Garden at Plains high School during the Carter's high school years.

Some of these subjects overlap; however, each has the potential to contribute valuable information in its own right. In addition, close coordination with the state archeological program must occur so that both prehistoric and historic archeological sites are provided for in the course of planning and development.

Care should be taken that the story of the Carters is not antisepticized, idealized or translated into a "log cabin" mythology that distorts the actual facts surrounding a region and people remarkable and unique in their own right.

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As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural and cultural resources. This includes fostering wise use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The department also promotes the goals of the Take Pride in America campaign by encouraging stewardship and citizen responsibility for the public lands and promoting citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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